



# An English-Reader's History of England

Anthony Toyne

OXFORD







# An English–Reader’s History of England







# An English–Reader’s Histoty of England

ANTHONY TOYNE

On the whole, they are a well–meaning people; so harmless that they are almost dumb.

*An Indian visitor to England*

The more I lived among them and saw how the machine was working—the English national life—and mixed with them, I found where the heart–beat of the nation was, and the more I loved them.

*Another Indian visitor*



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The writers listed are only some of those for whose work this book provides a background. The dates of their lives will guide you to pages with similar dates at the top.

The date after the title of a book or a poem shows roughly the time *about* which it was written, if the story was set at a time long before the dates of the author's own life.

(Remember that the 18th century, for example, was 1701–1800 and not 1801–1900.)

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# Introduction

This book tells a story. It can be read from beginning to end, if you want to know about all the centuries of English history. Or it can be used for reference only. You can refer to only one part of it if you are reading a novel, a play, or a poem about one particular time. The Readers' Index at the front of the book will help you do this. At the end of each chapter is a time chart which 'places' important persons and events in world history. Difficult words are explained in a word-list, which is one of the two indexes at the back of the book. Do not forget that the English word 'century', when used in a date after the birth of Christ, refers always to the hundred years *ending* with the number of the century—'the 17th century' meaning 1601–1700, for example—because the 1st century began at the beginning of the year A.D. I. One other thing must be said before you begin:

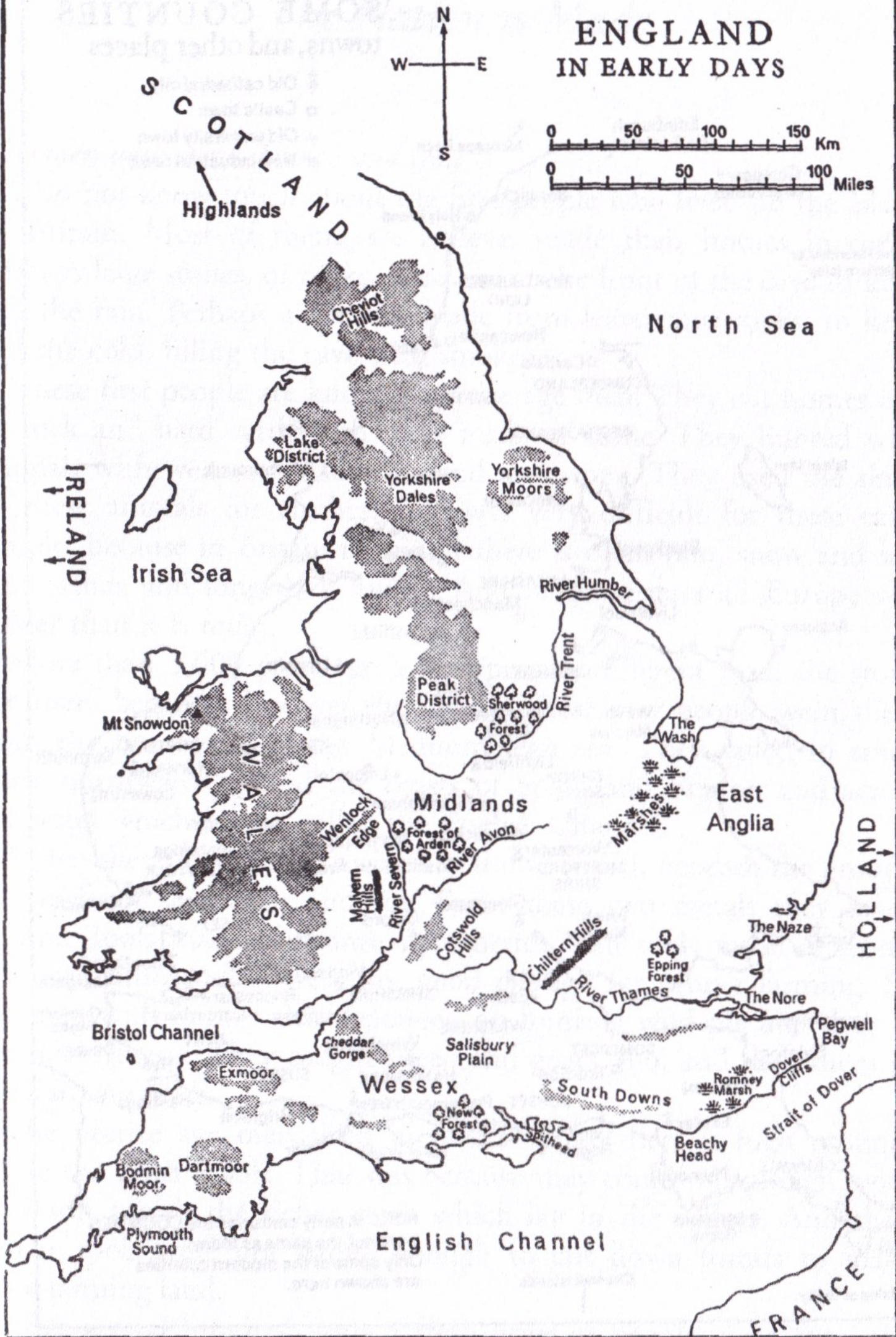
In the world today, the word 'Britain' is used to describe the island which contains England, Scotland and Wales. Today they form the United Kingdom; but England and Scotland were different nations until a few hundred years ago. Wales also was a separate country. Each of them has its own history.

Here, in this book, the stories of Scotland and Wales are not told, except where they are a part of English history. That is because most of the novels, plays and poems you read are about England, and the purpose of this book is to help you to understand that reading.

Why, therefore, does the word 'Britain' appear in the first sentence of Chapter 1? The answer is that in very early times the island was called by that name. The Angles, from whom 'Angle-land' or England was named, did not arrive until the Romans had been there for nearly 400 years. The Romans used the name Britain; and our story begins many centuries before the Romans arrived.









# SOME COUNTIES towns, and other places

- † Old cathedral city
- Castle town
- ▲ Old university town
- ⊙ New industrial town





## *The Nation is Made*

### *The men with stone, bronze and iron*

We do not know much about the first people who lived on the island of Britain. Most of them, we believe, made their homes in caves. Perhaps large stones, or rocks, were put at the front of the cave to keep out the rain. Perhaps a fire was made from leaves and sticks, to keep out the cold, filling the cave with smoke.

These first people are known as stone age men. They cut homes out of rock and hard earth with tools made of stone. They hunted wild animals with weapons made of wood and stone. They used the skins of these animals for clothes. Life was very difficult for these early people, because in Britain in winter there is often rain, snow and ice, cold winds and long dark nights. And in those days all Europe was colder than it is today.

More than 3,000 years ago a new people, different from the stone age men, began to discover the island. These new people went there from the hot coasts of the Mediterranean sea. They sailed in small boats northwards, round the coasts of Spain and France, and across the water which is now called the English Channel.

When these new men arrived they found wealth beneath the ground in the form of copper and tin. From these two metals they made bronze. Tools made of bronze were better than tools made of stone, but even bronze tools were not good enough for proper farming. So the men with bronze also depended on hunting wild pig and deer in the thick forests. They caught sheep and goats, too, and kept them in small square fields.

The bronze age men lived in places where there is high ground, where the earth is soft. That was because they could not plough, with their soft metal, the richer earth which lay in the valleys. And their bronze tools were not strong enough to cut down forests to make more farming land.

After several hundred years a fresh wave of people came from the



east of Europe. They found, under the ground, a new and harder metal: iron.

These eastern peoples arrived in Britain in little boats cut hollow from the trunks of trees. They moved slowly up the rivers and the valleys, digging for iron and making iron swords and spears with which they pushed back the men with bronze. They became proper farmers, turning the earth instead of only scratching it.

Although they ploughed the valleys, the men with iron also liked to live on the tops or sides of hills. Each tribe felt safer there from surprise attacks by other tribes. They built their villages on this high ground. Each village, with 20 or more strong wooden huts, was protected by a high fence and a deep ditch. The tribe drove its cows and sheep into the village in times of war.

Some of these people learned how to make clothes of wool. Rough pots and plates and bowls were also made. They were shaped by hand, not with the wheel that potters use today. The pots were for milk and water. Sometimes the men drank mead, a strong mixture made from grain and honey.

There were no tables or chairs, but there were wooden carts pulled by oxen for farming and for taking things to the next village to sell. Weights of iron were used for money, in the same way that coins are used today.

Other carts, pulled by horses, were used in war. The wheels of these carts were fitted with long knives to cut off the legs of the enemy. Before going into battle, men coloured their bodies blue, with the juice of a special kind of plant, called 'woad', to make themselves appear more frightening.

The people of the later iron age are called Celts. They had many gods about which we know very little.<sup>1</sup> But we do know that even before the Celts, men in Britain had put up great stones, several times their own height, to form circles. They used these stone circles, which were without roofs, as temples in which to pray to the sun and stars. One of these stone circles can still be seen today. It is called Stonehenge.

The priests were a caste called Druids. They were a high caste, like the Brahmins of India and the Magi of Persia. The Druids believed that dead people return to the earth in the form of animals or other men.

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that one of these gods was called Lyr, and that Shakespeare's ancient king, Lear, was named from him.



They prayed not only to the sun but to certain plants, with which they tried to make sick people well again. But they also killed people to please their gods.

### *The Romans*

The Celts continued to arrive in Britain until the first century B.C., and knowledge of the island flowed back to Europe. The Greeks called the island 'Albion', and the Romans said that this meant 'white-land', because the first view for most visitors was the white cliffs near Dover. A trade in tin began to develop across the 25 miles of English Channel. As the years went by, people in Europe learned more and more about Albion.

The most important city in Europe at that time was Rome. The Romans had conquered many countries round the shores of the Mediterranean and had made colonies of them. The Roman empire was still growing. Julius Caesar, its best general, set out to conquer France, which was then called Gaul. A few years later he decided to attack the island of Britain.

Caesar was able to get his army across the English Channel, but he was not able to conquer the islanders. The Britons, he wrote, 'grow their hair long and shave all their bodies except the head and the upper lip'. These wild people met him on the beaches, throwing spears and stones, and rushed forward, fighting with his soldiers in the waves. The Britons fought in families rather than in tribes, with women and even children behind the men.

Caesar sailed back to Gaul. He invaded again during the following year and defeated the Celts in the south-east. However, again he was unable to conquer the island. He took his army back to Rome and used it to become dictator there.

Britain was never visited by Julius Caesar again. Within 10 years he was killed in Rome by those who feared the power which he had won.

In fact, 100 years passed before the Romans went to Britain again. This time the soldiers were joined by their emperor, Claudius, and this time they went to stay. There were about 50,000 of them. The Celts fought them fiercely and for a long time. One of the Celtic chiefs, a man named Caratacus,<sup>1</sup> led his tribe against the Romans for 6 years among the mountains of Wales, the centre of Druidism. But at last

<sup>1</sup> Caratacus was the father of Cymbeline, about whom Shakespeare wrote a play.



he was defeated, captured by his enemies, and taken as a prisoner to Rome. A tribal queen called Boudicca, or Boadicea, who had been treated cruelly by the Romans when she was their prisoner, escaped and led her people in a hopeless attack against their shields. She and all her people were destroyed.

The Romans won all the country as far north as Scotland. A new Roman emperor, Hadrian, ordered a wall to be built near the Scottish border in order to keep out the Picts, 'the painted men', which was the name of the people who lived in Scotland at that time. The wall stood almost all the way from the North Sea in the east to the Irish Sea in the west.

The Romans took peace to Britain, although they took it with their swords. Under Roman rule, there were proper laws. When Britons had lived in tribes, justice was bought by bargaining, or was forced by violence; but Roman justice was a matter for the law-courts. Many people began to learn how to read and write, using the Roman language, which was called Latin. Theatres and even libraries arose.

Roman rule was strong. The Romans forced the islanders to build fine roads, with blocks of stone, along which Roman armies could march quickly, from one camp or town to another. The routes of some of these roads, such as Watling Street, are still used today. The towns were fortified. That is, they were built within high walls, so that the Roman officials inside them could work in safety. Most British towns with names ending with 'chester' or 'cester' were, in Roman times, fortified camps. Money to keep these roads, towns and camps in good condition was collected from the islanders by a tax on corn.

The largest of the towns was called Londinium. It was on the river Thames, where London is today. It became the capital city and many of the new roads led straight out from it to different parts of the country, rather like the spokes which spread out from the centre of a wheel.

Londinium was an important place, but even smaller towns had a forum, or market-place, a town hall, shops and often a hotel.

The Romans liked good organization, so the streets of the towns were laid out in neat plans, with the forum in the centre. Their narrow stone houses, some with tiled floors and an inner courtyard, or compound, were comfortable to live in. They were supplied with water by the town authorities and there was a good system of drainage.



Public bath-houses were also built, at which men and women bathed together.

The Romans were much more clean and tidy than the Celts had been. The men shaved their faces smooth and kept their hair cut short. They had a system of heating the water-supply in its pipes which not only warmed the home but made it easier to wash their bodies clean from dirt. The richer Britons began to copy them.

Many of the Roman soldiers worshipped the ancient Persian god of light, Mithra, and many of the Britons copied their forms of worship. As the years passed, Britons became more and more like Romans.

For amusements in the towns there were stadiums—areas enclosed for sports—in which men on horses fought against wild bulls. And there were pits in which hungry cocks were set to fight each other. The more the feathers flew, the more the excited audience enjoyed it.

Britain was important to the Romans. Celts became good soldiers, and many were taken to serve in the Roman armies. British towns were important for trade, because many good things for Rome, such as pearls and slaves, came from them. The Romans made sure that the island would develop into a civilized and friendly part of their empire. It was good for Britons to say: 'I am as good as a Roman. Although I live hundreds of miles away, I too can call myself a citizen of Rome.' People thought that both Rome and its empire would last as long as the world lasts.

In fact, however, Roman rule in Britain lasted for less than 400 years. Only the remains of a few roads and buried walls can be seen today. The Roman way of living also failed to last among the islanders.

The trouble was that the Romans treated their colonies in much the same way as the British themselves came to treat Asian and African countries later in history. The officials and traders went to Britain for their few years of duty, taking their families and households with them but returning home to Rome when their time was finished. Not many of them mixed with the Britons. They invited to their homes only those Britons who had learned the Roman language, Latin, and who had copied Roman clothes and manners.

There was never more than 1 Roman in the country for every 10 Britons. The island's total population of about a million was divided unequally into (i) Romans, (ii) Britons who were the children of Roman fathers and Celtic mothers and who followed Roman habits



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and became known as Roman-Britons, and (iii) Britons who worked as slaves.

### *The Saxons*

It was the Roman-Britons who suffered most when Roman rule ended.

The end came because the Romans had become too careless, liking comfort too much. They began to lose control over the Roman empire. Wild tribes from the east of Europe, from what is now Russia, began to spread west, searching for fresh land for farming. These tribes drove out other tribes living in Central Europe, and they moved even further west until they reached the borders of the empire. They were fierce and strong, and people feared they would reach Rome itself. Soldiers were brought back from all parts of the empire to help defend Rome against these wild men, whom the Romans called 'barbarians'.

Trouble in Britain started even before the last of the protecting Roman armies left. People stopped obeying the Roman laws. The Roman-Britons started quarrelling with each other. The Picts of Scotland (with the Scots, who had arrived in Scotland from Ireland) began pouring south over Hadrian's Wall. Pirates sailed up and down the English Channel, robbing ships and killing the men inside them. These pirates made it so dangerous to cross the Channel that people in Britain became completely separated from Rome. The island's life-line was cut.

The northern tribes of Europe acted quickly. Britain was a rich prize. Angles and Saxons and Jutes and other tribes from what is now Germany and Denmark landed on the beaches and at the river mouths in great long boats from over the North Sea. They were very wild—not like the Romans—and they did not mind killing the peaceful islanders in order to get what they wanted. What they wanted was land, a place to live in. In their search for it they spread across the country and even attacked the towns.

There was trouble in the unhappy island for over 100 years. But not all of it was due to the Anglo-Saxon invaders. Even in places still held by the Roman-Britons, there was no one left to keep the walls and roads in good repair. The Roman builders had gone. The fine buildings cracked and fell down, one after another. The clean streets of the towns were made dirty by the ox-carts of peasant families who entered



them for safety. Some of these poor people stayed in the market-places for a few days and then moved on in search of fresh land, leaving behind them heaps of rubbish which soon began to smell badly. Many people were hungry because of the rising price of food. It seemed, to the city-loving Roman-Briton, that the end of the world had come.

Rich Roman-Britons in the countryside were also in trouble. The land-owner's country house did not have fortified walls. It was easy for robbers to get in. And now they came with axes and beat down his doors and set fire to everything which they could not carry away. The land-owner, his wife and children were frightened and unprotected. Their slaves and peasants had all run away, or were hiding in the forest. Many farms were burned and corn was left to go bad in the fields.

Some of the land-owners decided to send letters to Rome for help; but soon Rome itself was entered by the eastern tribes. No help could be spared for Britain. Some of the Roman-Britons paid money to the Saxons, hoping to be left in peace. The Saxons took the money and then tricked the Roman-Britons by taking their farms also. In the south-east of the island, which is now Kent, the danger was from Jutes. The local chief, Vortigern, asked two Jutish brothers named Hengist and Horsa to save him from raids by the Picts. He promised them land. But as soon as they had got it they turned against Vortigern himself.

There was one Roman-Briton chief who did a lot to defend the country. In legend his name is King Arthur. Most of the things we read about Arthur are legend, or old stories passed on from father to son and later written down. We read that he had a number of knights who in council always sat at a round table to show that they were all equal. They fought 12 large battles against the Angles and Saxons; and, we are told, they kept the old Roman customs alive on roads and in the forests, particularly in the west where the Romanized Celts had been driven.

The legends<sup>1</sup> say that Arthur became king by pulling a sword out

<sup>1</sup> These legends are the source of many poems set, not at this proper time but, for romantic reasons, several centuries later. Poets felt that their graceful heroes (such as Launcelot, Galahad and Tristram) deserved the shining armour of medieval times. The real King Arthur's soldiers, living earlier, must have been much rougher.



of a hole in a stone, where it was fixed so firmly that no one else could get it out. He and his Knights of the Round Table, as they are called in the legends, kept court at a place called Camelot. The most well known of his knights was Sir Launcelot, who loved Arthur's queen, Guinevere. And Launcelot's son was Sir Galahad, the purest of all the knights. Galahad led a search for a cup called the Holy Grail, which people believed had been used by Jesus Christ. All we can say from this is that if Arthur lived in fact, he was almost certainly a Christian king.

Christianity had spread to Britain from Rome. It was different from both Druidism and the Saxon religion because it taught that there is only one God, whose son Jesus Christ had visited the earth and had been killed at Jerusalem in Palestine. Christians believe that everyone who believes that Christ then returned to God, will himself go to God after death. One of Christ's followers, Saint Peter, who was one of the first to believe this, started a church in Rome and became its first bishop. Those who became head of the Roman Church after Peter were known as popes. Their work was to spread belief in Christianity.

However, not all Romans believed in Jesus Christ. And the Angles and the Saxons were believers in gods more ancient than Christ. There was Tiw, the god of war; their chief god Woden, who was very wise and had only one eye; his wife Frigga, the goddess of nature and of love; and their son Thunor, the god of thunder, who was very strong. From these gods some days of the week are named: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Thursday.

The Anglo-Saxon religion said that after a man had died he arrived in a land of heroes.<sup>1</sup> People liked to hear songs and stories about these heroes, whom they believed were very brave and strong. In the long evenings after the ploughing and the hunting had been done, the free-men or 'churls' often went to the great room of their leader, the earl of the village, hoping that one or more of the legends<sup>2</sup> would be told or sung.

Here, between rough walls, the big fair-haired Saxons liked first to sit down and eat at a long table which filled most of the room. They

<sup>1</sup> One of these heroes was Weland the Smith, a maker of swords, who appears in Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*.

<sup>2</sup> One legend, later written down in the form of a story-poem, is still read today. It is called *Beowulf*.



ate meat and bread with their hands, and drank ale out of a cow's horn. Then, having cleaned their beards with the backs of their hands, they were ready to listen to the legends while the flames from wooden torches burnt low and smoke from the wood fire rose up towards the hole in the dark roof.

Outside, to guard the churls and their animals from sudden attack, a high pointed fence stood surrounding the village. Beyond that, the ploughed land lay. It was planted with corn or beans and divided among the churls in open strips, each about one acre in size. Beyond that, the forest grew thick and wild.

Saxon villages consisted of about 20 to 30 families, all faithful to their leader, the earl. Local rules (for example, how to share the great grass field between them before hay-making) were made by the 'moot'. The moot was a small meeting held on a grassy hill or under a tree. Sometimes it judged cases between the people of the village.

The many villages were, as time went by, grouped into hundreds; and the hundreds were grouped into shires. Each 'hundred' had an open-air court of justice, the judges being the leaders of the district, who were called aldermen. Important cases were judged by the sheriff of a shire or by a king's officer called a reeve. These cases were discussed at a shire moot, a kind of local parliament which met usually twice a year.

Many cases in Saxon times were about 'wergild' or 'man-price'. If a man was hurt or killed in a quarrel, it was the duty of his family to get revenge or obtain money or oxen instead. The amount of money or the number of oxen to be paid was measured by the importance of the man killed or hurt, and by the kind of hurt he had received. The wergild of every person was fixed, from churl upwards, according to class or caste. A slave had no wergild. The wergild of a free-man, or churl, was about one-sixth of that of an earl. Even kingdoms sought wergild, and revenge, on enemies who had killed their king. A war between large tribes could not, of course, be decided at court. It must be decided by treaty, or settlement, between the tribal or national councils concerned.

The king's council was called the Witan, a parliament of wise men. It could make laws and choose, or elect, new kings.

Within 200 years of their entry into England the various Anglo-Saxon tribes had decided how to share the country between them.



The Angles in the north and east made kingdoms called Northumbria, Mercia and East Anglia. The Saxons in the centre and south had Wessex, Sussex and Essex. People of other tribes, including the Jutes, had Kent in the south-east. The Celts remained unbeaten in Wales and the west.

### *The return of Christianity*

About 200 years after the Romans had gone, King Ethelbert of Kent allowed a missionary from Rome named Augustine to start a church at a village called Canterbury. The pope in Rome at that time wanted very much to make England a Christian country. There is a legend that the pope said, 'I will make them not Angles, but angels,' when he first saw a group of their fair-haired, blue-eyed children. And for that purpose he sent 40 holy men, or monks, with Augustine to Canterbury.

They did their work well. First they started a monastery at Canterbury to live and pray in. Then they began travelling all over England, telling people to believe in Jesus Christ. Within 100 years the whole country was divided into dioceses, each under a bishop. The dioceses in turn were divided into parishes, each under a priest. Churches were built with money collected in the form of a tithe—a tithe being a tenth part of every Christian's property or produce. The village church became important in the life of the Christian villagers. They began to be married there, and buried there, and were proud of it.

But many villagers were so poor that their tithes did not bring enough money to build a church, or pay a priest; so the rich Saxon earls often helped by lending the money. This sometimes led to trouble because the earls expected to be repaid out of tithes. They made the priests, whom they paid, do what they wanted, and they began to treat the whole parish as their own personal property.

Sometimes the earl did not care for religion at all. Then the priest must make money by becoming the partner of a land-holder, or must himself start to farm a holding, later called a 'glebe'. Farming left no time for proper work, and sometimes the only thing the priest cared about was getting rich.

In those early days, the real centres of Christianity were the monasteries, which began to appear all over the country. The monks had brought with them a love of reading and writing—in Latin, the great



civilizing language. Safe in the peaceful surroundings of a monastery or abbey, a monk could sit down with sharp-pointed goose's feather and write religious and historical records, called chronicles. Often these books were beautifully coloured, or 'illuminated'. This was done not with the goose-quill but with hairs from the tail of a horse, or even sharp-pointed fingernails, dipped in paints of blue, gold, green and red. The material on which the monks wrote was not paper, but parchment—a thin sheet of skin from a sheep or goat.

One group of monasteries which was started at that time, by an English monk named Benedict Biscop, later became very important. In the next chapter we shall see that within 500 years these monasteries became rich and worldly; but when Benedictine rule began it taught the simple life as being the best, and duty to learning as being duty to God.<sup>1</sup>

Before entering a monastery, a new monk or 'novice' promised to work hard, to pray often, and to live in peace. The monasteries were built with high walls, partly for protection but partly also to remind those inside that they had left the outside world and must now live in the service of God. Monks often became very wise; and many of them were good teachers, just as many Buddhist monks are today.

They started schools for ordinary people, but mostly for the rich. One of these schools had the boy who later became King Alfred the Great.

### *King Alfred and the Vikings*

During the 300 years before Alfred became king of Wessex, there was a long struggle for leadership between 3 kingdoms, each of which became, in turn, the most important in England. First Northumbria, then Mercia<sup>2</sup> became the most powerful. One of Mercia's kings, Offa, spread his power to the border of Wales, and there ordered a deep ditch, called Offa's Dyke, to be dug to keep the Celts out of his kingdom. Then Alfred's grandfather, King Egbert of Wessex,

<sup>1</sup> The first Benedict, Saint Benedict of Nursia, was an Italian who started monasteries in Europe. Augustine had been one of his followers and was the first to bring Benedictine thought to England. Another Benedictine monk, an Englishman named Bede, set a great example by writing, in Latin, a history of Saxon times which is still used as a store of knowledge. Later monks started an equally useful history called *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

<sup>2</sup> The English penny coin is named after Mercia's first great ruler, King Penda.



conquered Mercia and ruled the whole of England south of the river Humber:

But Egbert was not allowed to rule in peace. Vikings, who were Danes and Norsemen from what is now Denmark, Norway and Sweden, came as pirates and attacked the English coast. These attacks continued for the next 200 years.

King Alfred bore the worst of them. The Vikings came at first in small numbers, only about a dozen ships together. Each ship, long and narrow under its great square sail, carried 36 fighting men. Each ship was built for war, having a high front and brightly painted shields along each side to protect the men who rowed with oars when there was no wind.

These men, the Vikings, came to England for a reason different from the Saxons, 400 years earlier. They did not come to colonize the land, to live there or to farm there. They were masters of the sea. They came as pirates do, to rob and carry away all they could. They wanted, like many modern business-men, to make large profits quickly, and with as little risk as possible.

When a group of Vikings landed on a coast, it often ran first to the nearest monastery, looking for the precious ornaments which the monks kept in the room where they prayed. Then, when everything had been taken from the monastery, the Vikings usually hunted around the district for anything else of value which might be lying, quickly and secretly buried, under the hard earth of a farmhouse floor. Before the local people were able to get together and fight, the pirates had usually gone.

Nevertheless, Vikings were never afraid of war. They were fierce men with bushy beards, strong arms and great big axes and swords. Many of them wore huge helmets with metal horns and wings. In battle they were cunning and cruel. The 'berserks', a wild fighting caste among them, fought with a kind of fierce madness. Even the Vikings themselves were afraid of their berserks.

At home, among the mountains of Norway and by the beaches of Denmark, the Vikings were farmers like the Saxons were. They believed in the old Saxon gods: Woden whom they called Odin, and Thunor whom they called Thor. And they even had a happy and friendly god, whom they said was the son of Odin and whom they called Balder, the god of light. The Vikings took with them to



England many stories about these gods and about the heroes who joined them after death.<sup>1</sup>

The Viking caste system also was similar to that of the Saxons. Society was made up of the king, his nobles or thanes, free peasants, and serfs or slaves. The king's power was kept under some control by a parliament known as the *Thing*. And because the Vikings also had a system of wergild, the *Thing* also judged cases of that.

The time came when the *Thing* in Denmark agreed that an attempt should be made to rob England of all its riches. One autumn, while the summer's corn was being gathered in, a great Danish army of 5,000 men landed in East Anglia. It was prepared to spend many years on the island, sending back to Denmark as much wealth as it could find. Within 10 years it had spread throughout the north and east, conquering both Northumbria and Mercia. Then it began to move into Wessex.

King Alfred, the 24-year-old ruler of Wessex, was driven first this way and then that way, sometimes winning a small battle but often having to retire from one place to another. Although he had no real army—certainly none as strong as that of the Danes—he never gave up hope, and his men loved him for it. They had only sticks and spears to face an army of swords, axes and shields. At last they were driven into a wild part of Somerset in the west of the kingdom, where, from a village raised on a piece of land surrounded by muddy water, Alfred began to plan a new attack.

There is a legend about the young king hiding at that time in the home of a poor farmer. One day the farmer's wife wanted to go out, and asked him to watch some cakes which she was baking in the fire. Alfred could think about nothing except his plans for beating the Danes. He forgot to watch the cakes, and they burned. The farmer's wife, not knowing that Alfred was the king, shouted at him angrily when she came back. She told him what a useless fellow she thought he was!

Whether this is true or not, King Alfred's luck improved so much that he was soon able to gather together enough men to face his enemies again. This time he beat them.

The defeated Danes left Wessex, and Alfred obtained an agreement

<sup>1</sup> It is thought that one of these heroes was a Danish prince called Amleth, from whom Shakespeare's Hamlet is named.



by which their king and his army became Christians and promised to stay in the north and east of the country. There only, in parts of Northumbria, Mercia and East Anglia, Alfred allowed the Danish law, language and customs to continue. The area became known as the Danelaw.

Although the Danelaw covered almost half of England, Alfred was now able to hold on firmly to the south of the country, where the agricultural land was best. In the next few years he built up his strength, turning undefended villages into fortified towns, or boroughs. In each area he brought together the 'fyrd', an army of peasants who had fought for him; and he organized them into militia, or what today are called territorial armies. He ordered the men of London, which had been badly damaged in the fighting, to rebuild their walls. And he built a navy of ships, some with more than 60 oars, which were even stronger than the Viking long-ships. As a result of this, King Alfred has been called the Father of the British Navy. He was the first of many Englishmen to realize that, in order to be safe on an island, it is necessary to rule the sea. As he guessed, there was no more peace from raids from Denmark. They continued all through his reign.

In order to govern his kingdom properly, Alfred made a book of laws, some of them trying to get rid of violence by saying that wrong actions should be put right. For example, they tried to get people to accept payment as wergild, rather than turning to revenge. These rules were developed by other kings in later years into something that is now called the common law of England.

### *The Golden Age of the Saxon kings*

Alfred the Great was only 51 years old when he died, and his work remained only half finished. It was his son Edward, his three grandsons Athelstan and Edmund and Edred, and his two great-grandsons Eadwig and Edgar, who completed it.

According to legend, Alfred had told the boy Edward that the aim of a Saxon king should be to make his people 'as free as their own thoughts'. Edward knew that the first freedom to be won was freedom from Danish raids.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Saxon heroes who fought the Danes at this time became well known in legend. For example, Guy of Warwick who became a chief and saved England by killing the Danish giant Colbrand.



Edward therefore aimed to conquer the Danelaw. Helped by his sister, who ruled part of Mercia, he drove the Danes back to north of the river Humber—that is, into Northumbria. When he died, the whole of Mercia besides Wessex was under Saxon rule.

Athelstan, Edward's eldest son, continued this conquest by entering Northumberland. Together with his brother Edmund, he beat an army of Vikings and Scots at a place named Brunanburh, thus becoming the first real king of the whole of England. Celtic chiefs from the borders of Wales came to offer him service.

Nevertheless, when Athelstan died, the Danes rose again. Both Edmund and Edred, the next two kings, were kept busy all through their reigns. The fortified city of York was the great centre of Danish resistance. Twice it came under Viking rule. But by the end of Edred's reign the Saxons again controlled the whole of England.

Eadwig (sometimes called Edwy) reigned only 4 years and is remembered mainly for his quarrel with a holy priest named Dunstan, who had been in charge of the important abbey at Glastonbury and later was chief adviser to Eadwig's uncle, King Edred. There is a legend about Dunstan. While he was working at Glastonbury, the devil came to him in the form of a beautiful woman, with sweet words. Dunstan listened, but when the devil was least expecting it Dunstan pinched him by the nose and threw him out. The devil rushed off, the sweet words forgotten, shouting with pain.

That is a story, and it may also be a story that Dunstan quarrelled with the king because Eadwig had gone off to a woman in the middle of his coronation. Whether that is true or not, it is certainly true that Dunstan became famous in the reign of the new king, Edgar.

Edgar made Dunstan head of the church—that is, archbishop of Canterbury. During Edgar's reign, Dunstan started many new monasteries and spread the idea of Christianity all through the land, particularly in the Danelaw.

Edgar was a great king. The Saxons now commanded the whole country, and it remained generally at peace. Several Welsh and Scottish kings arrived in England to bow before the king at court. To show their duty to Edgar they rowed him across the river Dee in the royal long-boat.

In this shining age of Saxon rule, the Danes in the Danelaw also came to give service to an English king. The war-like Viking seamen



who had turned into soldiers now became peaceable peasants working on their farms.<sup>1</sup> A division of the farming land was agreed among them. The number of acres which 8 oxen could plough in a certain time became the area of a peasant farmer's holding.

But the nobles or thanes also held a large part of the land. It became part of a peasant's duty to help plough his thane's fields besides his own. The thanes themselves paid taxes, and they promised to lend the Saxon king a certain number of soldiers, militia, whenever necessary for the defence of the country as a whole. All this was an important beginning of what is called the feudal system, about which we shall read more in the next chapter.

### *The second Danish invasion*

Soon after Edgar's death, danger to the country came again.

King Ethelred became king at the age of 10, when his mother caused the murder of his half-brother Edward—later named 'Edward the Martyr'—who was the rightful king. During Ethelred's reign, Viking pirates once more attacked the coasts, rowed up the rivers, and caused trouble over wide areas of the country. Ethelred tried to make it easy for them to go away by paying them large sums of money. To get the money he forced his people to pay a special tax called the Danegeld. This did not make him well liked.

The Vikings, who this time were mostly Danes, went home pleased. But they soon came back again, wanting more. Ethelred did not know what to do. Later he became known as 'Ethelred the Unready'. He delayed, and in the end he did the worst thing possible. He tried to frighten them by killing many of the Danes already living in the country.

This foolish act caused the end of Saxon power in England. Among those killed by Ethelred's order was the sister of Sweyn Forkbeard, king of Denmark. King Sweyn was very angry. He wanted his wergild, in this case revenge. He sent a large army into England and drove the unhappy Ethelred out of the country. Ethelred went across the Channel to Normandy, in the north-west of what is now France. He chose Normandy because he had married the Duke of Normandy's sister and knew he would be safe there. From this marriage there was a son,

<sup>1</sup> It is at this time that the legendary prince, Havelok the Dane, marries an English princess and lives happily in England for 60 years until his death.



named Edward, about whom we shall read more in the next section.

Meanwhile, Sweyn's son Canute became king of England. He was elected by the Witan although he was a Dane. At first Canute was very cruel. He ordered the killing of many Saxon earls or nobles, and he replaced them with his own thanes. He hunted out and murdered one of Ethelred's sons. And he married Ethelred's Norman widow, which was against the law because he already had one wife.

However, as Canute grew older he became more religious. He went to Rome to see the pope, and he brought back with him many holy relics—things belonging to the first leaders of the Christian church—for the monks of England to keep in their monasteries.

He also became wiser. There is a story of how he made fun of some of his thanes. They were praising him too much, and telling him that now he was a great king he could do anything he liked. Perhaps they told him that he was as powerful as God. Anyway, he told them to take his throne down to the beach. There he sat, facing the waves, and ordered the in-coming tide to rise no further. Of course he got his feet wet, but it showed his thanes that kings are not god-like and that it is foolish to say they are.

Canute in his last years did much to make Danes and Saxons live peacefully together. As soon as he died, however, they started quarrelling again. The country became very unhappy. The peasants were getting from agriculture only just enough to keep themselves alive, and were sending nothing to the towns. They had nothing extra to send, because it was all being taken by the nobles in the form of taxes. That was quite against the law; but the nobles were now making new laws of their own. They were mostly land-owners in charge of large areas, even groups of shires, and some of them had become very powerful.

The most powerful of all the nobles, Saxon or Dane, was a man called Godwine, whom Canute had made Earl of Wessex. This Godwine is important in our story because he was the first of several great feudal lords whose power was sometimes greater than even the king's. Later we shall see such men making kings and breaking them. They are called 'king-makers' or 'powers behind the throne'.

### *The Normans*

When Edward—the son of Ethelred by his Norman wife—was



elected king by the Witan, Godwine tried to break him. Godwine thought that the many Normans who had come across the Channel in Edward's court would try to rule the country. He also thought that even though the new king had spent his life in Normandy, this did not make it right for Normans to rule England; and so he tried to stop it by asking other Saxons to form a 'nationalist' group or party.

Two other important noblemen, however, Leofric of Mercia<sup>1</sup> and Siward of Northumberland<sup>2</sup> (a Dane), joined the king, who soon brought more Normans in.

The trouble about Edward was that he was a weak king. He was a good Christian (he was afterwards known as 'the Confessor' because of his purity), he built a fine abbey at Westminster near London, and he was well liked; but he could never say 'no' to the demands of his Norman friends.

Nevertheless, during the last part of Edward the Confessor's reign the most important man in England was a Saxon—Harold, son of Earl Godwine. Harold, who was a brave man like his father, had the bad luck of being taken to the Norman court when a ship which he was in was driven by winds on to the coast of Normandy. The ruler of Normandy, Duke William, made Harold agree to himself, the Duke, becoming king of England after Edward's death. It is said that Harold promised to support William, after which William let him go free. But it happened that, when Edward died, the Witan chose Harold to be king.

Duke William said that he had been tricked, and prepared an army for the invasion of England. Harold, a bold and popular king, waited for him. Meanwhile, there was further trouble waiting for Harold and his Saxon earls.

Harold's brother Tostig had been turned out of England for cruelty to the people of Northumberland, and had gone to Scotland. From there, Tostig agreed to a Viking plan to conquer England and get rid of Harold.

<sup>1</sup> Earl Leofric's wife, the young and beautiful Lady Godiva, is well known in English legend for having gone, without clothes, on a horse through the streets of the city of Coventry. She did this to try to make her husband stop making the people pay such large taxes.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Siward of Northumberland became defender of the northern border against the Scottish king, Macbeth. He helped the Scottish prince Malcolm, son of King Duncan whom Macbeth had murdered, to conquer Macbeth.



Thus Harold was faced with danger from both south and north. His northern enemies were ready first. In the autumn of the year 1066, a fleet of Viking ships sailed up the river Humber to join with Tostig at York. King Harold hurried north, gathering together the 'fyrd', an army of militia from the shires. He also had with him his personal servants, called house-carles. Within five days he was opposite the Viking army at a place called Stamford Bridge. Tostig was killed. With bows and arrows, spears, swords and axes, Harold and his men broke the last Viking soldiers ever to set foot on English soil.

But meanwhile winds from the south had blown Duke William's Norman ships across the English Channel. There were now no Saxon soldiers left in the south to stop this army, which consisted of about 6,000 men including a large number of archers and horse-soldiers. As William stepped on to land he fell, the legend says, and took hold of the earth with both his hands to save himself. 'Look,' he joked quickly, 'I have already taken England with my hands.'

With wonderful speed and great boldness, Harold and his men hurried back over the 200 miles to the south. On 13 October they arrived near a place called Hastings, not far from where William had, landed. The battle took place on the next day.

The Saxon army of about 7,000 men was on top of a low and grassy hill, above a stream called Senlac—which the French later named Senguelac, 'the lake of blood'. The house-carles and militia of Harold's army were tired after their long journey. They had few horses and were nearly all on foot. Those in the front line made a wall with their shields and the rest stood behind them waiting for the Norman attack.

Duke William's army let loose hundreds of arrows and rushed up the hill; but they could not get past the men with shields. Then the Norman knights on horseback attacked, all clothed in leather covered with metal rings, called chain mail. They came, striking down at the Saxons with long swords; but they too failed to break the Saxon line, although they came at it again and again.

Then, in the afternoon, William decided on a trick. He made his soldiers pretend to run away. The Saxon militia gave a shout of joy and rushed down the hill. William's horsemen turned, charged again, and cut them all to pieces.

Evening came over Senlac, and the sun went low in the sky. Only Harold's brave house-carles now remained round his flag. The Norman



archers shot high into the air. The arrows came down like rain, one of them entering Harold's eye. The house-carles gathered round the fallen body of their king, and, as the knights attacked again, carried it off the battle-ground into a forest which was near.

Thus the sun went down on the last of the Saxon kings. The Normans, who were hard people, determined to make themselves safe in the island. They did this by killing many of the important Saxon earls and by setting fire to the land in order to make it too poor for Saxon land-owners to live on. King William later ordered a record, or register, of all land-holdings to be made. In this register, which Saxons called the Domesday Book,<sup>1</sup> large areas of the country are described as desert, or useless land. The Normans had done their work thoroughly.

Only a few Saxons tried to stop them, and nearly all of these were caught and killed in the end. One of them was a well-known leader named Hereward the Wake, who after many adventures gave up at last in the low and marshy country of East Anglia.

For the first few years after the battle of Hastings it must have seemed impossible that King William's cruel treatment would ever result in a mixing of Normans, Saxons and Danes. But as the years passed, the Saxons and Danes began to copy Norman habits in manners and dress. And the Normans started to grow their hair long, and grow beards, like the Saxons. There were even mixed marriages. The old Anglo-Saxon language began to take in words from Norman French. Within about 100 years England had become a single nation once again.

<sup>1</sup> Doomsday is, to the Christian, the last day of the world, when God will judge men. Saxons thought that Judgement Day had come!



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 1

ENGLAND	SCOTLAND, EUROPE WALES AND IRELAND		WORLD
CENTURIES B.C.			
Stone age men		Aryans	Sumerians
Bronze age men		Phoenicians	Indo-Aryans
Iron age men	Picts in Scotland	Greeks	Persians
Celts	Scots in Ireland	Romans	Mauryas
FIRST CENTURY A.D.			
Roman conquest	Scots in Scotland	St Peter in Rome	Buddhists in China
SECOND CENTURY			
Hadrian's visit	Wall built	Roman Empire at largest	Indo-Scythians
THIRD CENTURY			
Roman rule	Scottish raids	R. Empire raided	Sassanids
FOURTH CENTURY			
Saxon raids	Celts in Ireland	Constantinople	Guptas
FIFTH CENTURY			
Saxon conquest	Christianity in Ireland	Rome captured	Attila
SIXTH CENTURY			
Saxon farms	Christianity in Scotland	Pope Gregory	Mayas in America
SEVENTH CENTURY			
Christianity	Celts in Wales	Byzantine Empire	Mohammed
EIGHTH CENTURY			
Mercia powerful	Offa's Dyke	Arabs in Spain	Muslims in India
NINTH CENTURY			
Wessex powerful	1st Scottish king	Emperor	African emirates
Alfred and Danes	Vikings in Scotland	Charlemagne Vikings reach Black Sea	Rajput kings
TENTH CENTURY			
End of Danelaw	Vikings in Ireland	Rise of Normandy	Vikings reach America
ELEVENTH CENTURY			
Canute/William I	Macbeth	Feudal system	Turks in Jerusalem Empire of Ghana



## *The Nation Grows*

### *The feudal system*

In this chapter and the next, we look at the four centuries—the twelfth to the fifteenth—which are known as the ‘medieval’ or ‘middle’ ages. In the twelfth century English society grew strong but stayed tied to old ideas. For example, it remained very closely connected with the western European tribal system. The Norman kings of England held land in France and thus still belonged to the main tribe of the French king. Wars were between rulers, not between nations as they are today. Soldiers fought not for their country but as part of their duty to the leader of a tribe.

By the end of the twelfth century, Saxons and Normans had joined together as a single nation; but few of their rulers thought of themselves as separate from the rest of western Europe. It was only after England had been at war with France for over a hundred years, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that the fact of independence was realized. And when that happened, people were able to look forward and outward. They became willing to try new ways.

Meanwhile, one of the things that tied England to France was the feudal system, a means of holding together the members of a tribe. To understand the middle ages, we must understand the feudal system first.

It was a method of organizing society. In this rich farming country, with a scattered population of less than 2 million, land was the most important source of wealth, and labour was the most prized thing that wealth could buy. The French word ‘feu’, which the Normans used, meant ‘fee’—land held in exchange for duty or service to a lord. The feudal system was a system of fees. Land could only be held ‘in fee’, which meant ‘in return for labour’.

As we have seen, holders of land already owed duty to a lord, but after the Norman conquest much of the land had been fired. Only one or two of the Saxon earls remained, and not many more of the churls. Without leaders, people were afraid of what would happen



next. And without food, hunger as much as fear ruled men's minds.

King William I—he was called 'the Conqueror'—was faced with another problem, too. Over 100 Norman nobles, his 'barons', had helped him conquer the island, and now looked to him for reward. The English farming land was his. He could give some of it to them, but he had to be careful. Most of the barons already held land in Normandy. If a baron was given a large area in England also, and had many peasants to work on it, he might become richer and more powerful than the king.

Nevertheless, William himself was stronger than any king in England had ever been before. He decided to let his barons hold English land 'in fee', in exchange for continued service to himself. At the same time he made sure that the estates held by any one baron were all in different parts of the country, so that no baron could control a single large area. About one quarter of England, mainly the towns and the forests, he kept for himself.

Also, the Conqueror allowed his barons to build wooden castles on their new estates, hoping that this would keep the Saxon countrymen from making trouble. Most of the barons were glad to do this, because some of the more powerful barons were known to be hungry for even more land and power. Some in fact succeeded in seizing estates from their weaker neighbours and then getting pardon from the king.

To make sure that the peace was kept—'the king's peace'—the Conqueror built a number of his own wooden castles, especially in the towns which he had kept under his own control. The Tower of London is an example, although it has since been rebuilt in brick and stone.

It was also necessary that the roads came under the king's direct control. During his reign William was moving continually from one castle to another, making sure that his laws were kept. He used these journeys also to collect taxes. They were paid into his treasury for keeping the royal army.

Three times a year King William invited all the barons and many of the chief knights from the shires, or counties, to come to a meeting of his Great Council, which was like the old Saxon Witan. Here he asked for their advice in government and told them their duties. Some were ordered to serve at court, that is in the government. Others must act as sheriffs in the shires and towns. They controlled the shire and borough



moots, and collected rents and taxes for the treasury, wherever the king could not go himself. Many more were told to find knights and foot-soldiers for the army. In exchange for these services, William allowed his barons not only to continue to hold their estates but also to collect some taxes for themselves.

Many barons put some parts of their land into the care of knights, also in exchange for service. A baron to whom a knight owed service was called his liege-lord, his 'over'-lord. In the same way, the king was the liege-lord of a baron. As payment for his 'fief—which is another word for fee—a knight must sometimes serve in his liege-lord's castle, along with other 'enfeoffed' knights. Sometimes he was ordered to serve in the royal army as part of the baron's duty to the king. Often he must find a number of foot-soldiers to serve with him.

The enfeoffed knight found these foot-soldiers from among the common people who were his own tenants. It was usual for each knight who was the tenant of a baron to let out part of his fief to small farmers called villeins, the people of the village. They became his tenants, and he became their liege-lord. They depended on him, and he on them. Many villeins were forced to help their liege-lord to farm that part of the feudal estate which he kept for himself and called his 'demesne'.

That in outline was the feudal system. Fees were passed on from father to son or heir. When a fee-holder died before his heir was old enough to give the service required by the fee, the land passed into the control of the liege-lord. The child became the 'ward' of the liege-lord until old enough to manage his (or her) feudal duties. Meanwhile the lord got the profit from farming the fief.

The feudal system had two general effects on English society. First, it strengthened it and kept it strong. Each tenant in the system gave service to a liege-lord—the villein to his knight, the knight to his baron, and the baron to his king. And because each liege-lord needed his tenants for various kinds of service, he gave them his protection in times of trouble.

Second, however, society became unbending and unable to develop, like a climbing plant that is tied too tightly to a stick. The people as a whole were held closely together, each caste or class looking for help and protection to those both above and beneath. The result was that nobody was really free. Everyone had become the servant of someone else.



*Country life under the feudal system*

The villeins suffered more than anyone. They did not like the Domesday Book because, for the first time, it showed the government how many cows and sheep they had, and therefore how much they could be taxed. There were local taxes to be paid, too, as permitted by the king. When a villein sold a pig or an ox, or got his daughter married, part of the money received must be paid to the village lord. When a villein died, his eldest son farmed the land; but the lord took as death tax the family's best cow, or plough, or store of grain.

More than anything else, the villeins did not like having to help farm that part of the fief which the lord kept for himself. Some lords demanded 5 days' work a week on their demesnes. That was time which the villeins could spend otherwise—perhaps in making the rough woollen cloth called 'russet' (from its colour, red-brown and grey) in which they worked and slept, or in cutting and sewing leather boots which kept out the winter's mud, or in collecting animal-waste for their fires and for fertilizing ploughed land.

In many parts of the country, the land used by the villeins was in the shape of long, narrow strips on the open 'common' fields of the village. These strips were ploughed by teams of 8 oxen shared among the villagers. A good farmer sometimes became rich enough to hold several strips in different parts of the open fields. Usually there were three such fields, of which one would be left each year unused. That field would be ploughed in the following year, when another would be left out of use. There was often a grass field too, perhaps by a river, where hay was grown in the spring and cut in the summer. The animals of the village were put out to feed on waste-land which was separate from these fields.

The three-field ploughing system meant that no villein could plant on his strip crops which were different from the crops on the other strips in the common field. And all ploughing, or planting, or taking the harvest in, must be done at the same time. Also, no one was allowed to leave the land without permission from his lord. If he did, then he became an outlaw. Many did run away, because a villein's life was hard. Outlaws generally hid themselves in a busy town or in a forest.

The cottages in which the villeins lived were built close together,



sometimes on each side of a village street of rough earth, and sometimes surrounding a cross-roads or a closed field—a 'green'—for animals. Occasionally they were grouped together round a church.

The church was generally the centre of village life. Often it was used as a meeting-house. The priest who kept the church was called the parson, or rector or vicar. He was more than the religious leader of the village. Usually he could read and write. He advised the villagers in all matters, settled quarrels among them, and so helped to keep the peace.

Most of the villeins were very poor. Some owned part only of a cow or an ox. Their cottages since Saxon times had been built of wood and clay, with floors made of bare earth and roofs made of dried straw. They were damp, dark, and smelly. Cottagers who had an upper floor slept on straw bags upstairs and kept their animals below. Just enough meat was salted to last through the long winter months, and just enough grain was stored to keep an animal or two alive until the spring. If bad weather came at the wrong time, and stayed to spoil the harvest, many people starved.

At Easter time, the worst time of the year for food, tenants must give eggs to the lord of the manor. And after harvest they must pay a price for grinding their corn in his mill, and for cooking their bread in his oven. When they did wrong, the lord decided their cases in the manor court-room. He could punish them for hunting birds and small animals in the manor woods. He was their ruler and their judge.

The word 'manor' meant the whole estate of a village lord—his house, his 'home' farm or demesne and all the strips which he kept for himself on the open fields of the village. On the estate there was usually a house for the steward or reeve who helped manage the lord's affairs, another for the bailiff who collected all taxes due from the villagers, and cottages for the game-keepers or foresters who protected the birds, rabbits and wild pigs in the lord's woods.

The manor-house itself was sometimes built of brick or stone set round a central court-yard. Unlike the chief's house of Saxon times, it had separate rooms upstairs for sleeping. Downstairs there were also several rooms, with great fireplaces cut in the walls and wide chimneys set in them to take the smoke. The floors of these rooms were often made of large flat pieces of stone, and the lord's serfs or slaves slept on them. On the high bare walls, heavy lengths of cloth were usually



hung for warmth. The outer walls were cut with narrow shot-holes.

There was not much furniture. A long rough wood table for eating at, and a few hard seats, together with a cupboard or two downstairs, and perhaps a bed and wooden boxes for clothes upstairs—these were the only articles that most land-lords owned.<sup>1</sup>

A knight holding several manors often travelled for much of the year between them. While he was away, his reeve or steward controlled the estate for him. If he was an important knight, a knight of the shire, he was away frequently, appearing for the shire at the king's council. At these times the reeve was a big man in the working of the village. No part of village life could go forward without his permission—no ploughing, no planting, no hay-making, no harvesting. When his lord was absent, the reeve even became the judge in the manor court.

The villeins looked towards the manor very much, sometimes with fear and usually with dislike. Starting in the twelfth century, it lay within the lord's power to make a villein and his family free—that is, to accept a money rent instead of service in exchange for land. At first this was allowed only when a tenant became ill, or grew old, or died leaving no son to perform his duties to the liege-lord. Later, however, as the better farmers grew richer, they wanted time and freedom to manage their own affairs, and they were prepared to pay for it. The liege-lord found the money useful because he could spend it as he liked. The rent paid was called 'socage', and the person who paid it was a 'socman' or 'sokeman'—a free tenant.

Sometimes a tenant paid part rent, part service. When the barons began to allow their knights to pay rent instead of serving in the army—this kind of rent was called 'scutage', or shield money—they could then pay other, better knights to serve as soldiers. Similarly, when a knight received rents he could pay labourers to farm his strips.

And so, when William the Conqueror's son, William II, tried to increase the royal power by getting more money into the treasury, all his nobles began looking for money from their tenants to pay him.

As one Norman king followed another, the need for money grew.

<sup>1</sup> Castles of the sort described in Keats's 'The Eve of St Agnes', Coleridge's 'Christabel', and Scott's novels belonged only to rich and powerful barons.



Many estates were rented to rich men from the towns. It was during the twelfth century, therefore, that the modern system of rents in exchange for tenancies began to develop.

### *William II and Henry I*

Most of England was land from which no rents could be collected. For example, much of the north and south-west was bare, wild and open land. It is still open and bare today. Other districts were forest, larger than they are today. Both William I and William II developed England's forests for hunting wild pigs, deer and wolves. They also hunted big birds such as swans and herons, using small, fierce birds called hawks.

The forest people lived in lonely villages consisting of a few mud-and-stick huts. They had no fields for cows, sheep or corn, and life was difficult. They were allowed to kill rabbits, foxes and squirrels—but not deer. Laws limiting hunting rights in England's forests have continued till today, but they pressed heavily on people who depended on the forest for food. Many poor peasants killed deer and became outlaws; they lived as robbers, along with villeins hiding from some angry lord.<sup>1</sup>

William II liked hunting very much and spent so much time in the open air that his face became brown from the sun and he was known as 'Rufus' or 'the Red'. He was a fat, rough, rude, cruel man, one of three brothers. The eldest, Robert, was given Normandy by his father. William received England. The youngest, Henry, received 5,000 pounds of silver. Robert and William quarrelled, and many of the barons with estates in both Normandy and England supported Robert. Twice it was necessary for William to find money and raise the fyrd to fight barons who turned against him. He increased royal control over the towns in order to strengthen his position. He called for new taxes to pay for the defence of his throne. That was against all custom, but he was supported by many people who thought that 'the king's peace', even under an expensive ruler like William, was better than unlawful rule by the much feared barons.

William Rufus was killed in the fourteenth year of his reign. One day in August of that year, while hunting in the New Forest near

<sup>1</sup> The life of outlaws living in a forest was not of course as happy as in stories about Robin Hood, or in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.



Southampton, he was shot by an arrow from one of his own men. Perhaps it was an accident, perhaps a crime. Nobody knows.

He left no son. Many people thought that the crown of England would be given to Robert, Duke of Normandy, because he was the elder brother. But Robert was still on his way back from Palestine, in that summer, as part of an army which had been fighting the Turks.

William's younger brother, Prince Henry, lost no time. He rode straight for the royal treasury at Winchester, took it, and was chosen king by the Great Council.

The war in which Duke Robert had been fighting is called the First Crusade. It had started because, 30 years earlier, the Muslims of Turkey had captured Jerusalem, which is the place where Jesus Christ had worked and died. The head of the western Christian church, the pope in Rome, had asked for help in recovering the Holy Land, as it was called. After much marching and fighting, Christian noblemen from many European countries had driven the Turks out of the holy places.

When Duke Robert arrived back in Europe, he crossed the Channel with an army but failed to reach London. Henry then took soldiers to Normandy, fought against Robert, captured him and shut him up in a castle where he later died.

Henry I was a wiser king of England than Rufus had been. Because he could read and write well, he was known as 'the good clerk'. He wanted to keep the peace. At his coronation, when he was given the crown, Henry declared in a charter which was read at every shire court that he promised justice for all in his kingdom. This began a custom for future kings. It came to be expected that a king would declare his policy, and make promises to his people, in a charter signed at the beginning of his reign.

Society was divided by language. It was like the societies of many Asian and African countries which have been under colonial rule in the present century. The top classes spoke French, the language of the conquerors. The lower classes still spoke Anglo-Saxon—or 'Old' English as it is known—a language with little grammar or literature.<sup>1</sup>

As ruler of both England and Normandy, Henry tried to bring Saxons and Normans closer together. He raised several Englishmen to

<sup>1</sup> Old English is studied only in universities today. Ordinary people cannot understand it.



the Norman rank of knight. He married a Saxon princess. His government, the Great Council of his tenant chiefs, had become too large to work well and quickly. So inside it a smaller council was developed. Officers of the king's own household sat at this council. Chief among them were the Treasurer who dealt with money matters and the Chancellor who saw that the king's orders and laws were written properly. These chancery 'writs', as they were called, were then made known at shire moots throughout the country. Henry I's chancery was the beginning of the civil service which manages these things in England today.

One way of making sure that the common people followed the law was a system called 'frankpledge'. By this, men in the lower classes must form themselves into groups, 'tithings', of 10 or 12. If one man in the group did anything against the law, for example stealing or killing, then the others in the group must find him and bring him to court.

Sometimes a wrong-doer faced trial by battle. That meant fighting the man to whom he had done wrong, or the friend or relation of that man. More often, there was trial by ordeal. The 'ordeal' was sometimes this: the man was tied up and lowered into a pond of cold water. If he sank, he was taken up and set free (if he was still alive); but if he did not sink he was thought to be guilty and one of his feet was cut off as a punishment. At other times a man would be made to hold a red-hot iron. If the burn became poisonous within three days he was guilty.

The official language of the courts, of the law, and of government, was Latin. This language of Rome was also the language of the church and of all learning. The use of Latin by the government and its officials kept the country close to European ideas; because Latin was still an international language in Europe.

Henry I was much concerned with affairs in Europe. Together with keeping England peaceful and developing its wealth, he must make sure that Normandy, which he had taken from Robert, was safe from attack. Henry did this by taking other parts of France. However, after 20 years as king, his plans for keeping England and Normandy together were upset when a ship<sup>1</sup> on which his son was travelling sank in the English Channel.

When Henry himself died, 15 years later, there was only a daughter to follow him on the throne.

<sup>1</sup> Rossetti's 'The White Ship'.



*Maud against Stephen*

She was called Maud by the English and Matilda by the Normans. Few people wanted a woman on the throne, and the people of London gave the English crown to her cousin, Stephen. It was an unhappy choice. Stephen was weak, but Maud was hard, proud and brave. Working from Normandy, she helped several of the English barons to rebel against Stephen. Then she came to England herself. There was civil war, with Englishmen fighting against Englishmen. Some barons fought only for profit, like the Vikings of ancient days, robbing the castles and the monasteries and taking away all they could. Towns were burned and villages were broken down. As always, it was the poor people who suffered most.

Stephen was beaten at a battle near Lincoln. Maud was chosen queen at Winchester and entered London. But she did not stay there long. The first thing she did was to order the Londoners to pay a tax. They at once reached for their swords and spears and drove the proud queen out of the city's walls. She went to Oxford. Stephen again wore the crown.

A year later, Stephen was strong enough to go with an army to Oxford castle, where Maud had shut herself in. She escaped during a night in winter, wearing a white coat so that she should not be seen against the ice and snow.

Stephen was still not safe, however. Some of the barons had by this time become so rich and powerful that they ruled large areas of the country. They saw that he was weak and went on robbing their poorer neighbours, killing and destroying. No one could stop them. Over many parts of the countryside the fields lay waste because the farmers had been driven from their homes. Food became scarce and thousands of people died from famine.

At this terrible time, many ordinary people left the country to fight in the Second Crusade. Being killed while trying to keep the Turks from the Holy Land seemed a better end to life than dying from hunger or from a robber's sword. Luckily some of the war-like barons also went to fight abroad.

The Second Crusade was almost a complete failure. But other important things were happening in Europe while Stephen struggled with his barons. Maud had married Geoffrey Plantagenet, ruler of Anjou in France. Geoffrey had conquered Normandy, and he and



Maud now ruled there. When Geoffrey died, their son Henry became ruler of both Normandy and Anjou.

A year later, at the age of 19, Henry married Eleanor the duchess of Aquitaine in southern France. She was many years older than he, but she brought under his control a very large area of France. Indeed, Henry now held, in fief from the French king, land reaching from the Pyrenees northwards to the English Channel.

As soon as he felt powerful enough, Henry landed with an army in England. He quickly conquered nearly half the country and then called Stephen to a meeting.

Stephen was tired and sick. His elder son had died; his younger son was settled in France. He agreed that Henry should be king after him. A treaty, or written agreement, was made at Winchester in front of 14 bishops and 11 earls. When Stephen died, a few months later, Henry sat on the throne.

Stephen had been the last of the Norman kings. Henry II, of the family of Anjou, was an Angevin.

### *Henry Plantagenet*

The family name was Angevin, but they came to be called Plantagenet, because that was the name of Henry's father. The lands which the family held were in fee to their liege-lord, the French king; but these lands were now far greater than those ruled directly by him. And when Henry conquered Ireland, these Plantagenet lands became an empire.

Henry II, King of England, Duke of Normandy, Lord of Anjou and Aquitaine, spent his life trying to keep this empire strong. His reign marks the beginning of England's rise as a nation equal to France.

His first problem, however, was to bring peace back to his new kingdom. For the first year of his reign he was always on horseback, riding with his knights from city to city and from castle to castle, forcing even the strongest barons to obey him.

By this time, many of the knights holding manorial estates were paying scutage instead of giving service. With the money thus received, professional knights, or mercenaries, were hired to do the king's police-work. They were often rough men, described in stories and poems as better and finer than they really were. A description of medieval knights is in the next section.

Although Henry II preferred to receive rents rather than service



from his tenant families, he favoured those few barons who served him well in the central government and in the shires. These sensible men often showed both skill and wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Some of them helped to extend the system of travelling judges, started by Henry I. The travelling 'assize' courts, as they are called, moved round the county towns. Unlike the courts of local lords, they could offer trial by jury—that is, a man's neighbours could appear in the court and give truthful information about the case. Many people found better justice in a king's court than in a lord's court. Now it was the jury, rather than the system of ordeal, which was beginning to decide whether a man was guilty.

Henry II's judges developed the division of English law into two kinds: first, the law based on common customs which is called 'the common law'; and second, that based on the laws made by parliament (in those days, the king's council), called 'statute law'. Both kinds of law were made to apply to barons, besides applying to the ordinary people of town and country.

Many barons were not pleased at being controlled directly by the king. Neither was the church, whose abbots and bishops had a strong hold on the English people. Many church-men wanted to take their orders from the pope in Rome, not from the English king. Their leader was Thomas Becket, who earlier had been a friend of the king. Henry had made him Chancellor, one of the most important officers in the government. Becket served so well in that position that Henry now made him Archbishop of Canterbury—that is, head of the English church. Henry did this because he thought that Becket would make the bishops obey the statute law. Instead, however, Becket began to work against him.

The bishops and abbots were the barons of the church. The bishops held land in their 'sees', or dioceses, in almost the same way that ordinary barons held their estates. Similarly, the abbots controlled the lands of the abbeys and monasteries.

There were several kinds or 'orders' of monks, each order following a different set of rules by which they lived and worked and prayed.

<sup>1</sup> Although not all of them were honest. Many sheriffs worked more for their own gain than for their master the king. In medieval stories and ballads the sheriff is often the bad man—for example, the Sheriff of Nottingham in ballads about Robin Hood.



Some shut themselves up inside their monastic walls, seldom talking even with each other and never talking with people from outside. Monks of the Cistercian order—they were called ‘white’ monks because they wore white—were examples of these. Monks of the Carthusian order, who had reached England during the twelfth century, were even more silent and alone. A much earlier order, the Benedictines or ‘black’ monks, who had been in the country since Saxon times, was the richest of all the orders. The Benedictines were also the most powerful. Several Benedictine abbots even sat at the king’s council, because it was important to Henry that the church should be as loyal to him as his knights were.

The trouble with Becket developed from the position of the church courts. They were different from the king’s courts, partly because the punishments they gave for crimes against the king’s laws were less severe. Henry demanded that a certain church clerk, who had been given by a church court only a slight punishment for murder, should be handed over to a king’s court. Also, he demanded that important cases coming before the church courts should not be referred to the pope in Rome without his royal permission. Becket refused, and escaped from the country to France.

As Archbishop of Canterbury, it was Becket’s right to act at coronations by placing the crown on the king’s head. While Becket was in France, Henry decided to have his eldest son, Prince Henry, crowned king so that there should be no argument about who was to be king after his death. The coronation was performed by the second leader of the church, the Archbishop of York.

Becket was angry. He went back to England to excommunicate, or cut off from the church, some of the king’s barons who had been present at the coronation. Henry’s anger was very great when he was told about this, during a Christmas feast at one of his French castles. He asked loudly whether no one would get rid of Becket for him. Four knights, hearing his words, took a ship to England and rode on to Canterbury. There they found Archbishop Becket, and there, in the cathedral, they murdered him with their swords.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For many years afterwards, people regarded Becket as a martyr, a saint who had died for his beliefs. Pilgrims journeyed to Canterbury Cathedral from all parts of the Christian world to see his relics. Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* is about such a pilgrimage.



Henry's character was always a curious mixture of hot temper and cool wisdom. He had red hair, a thick neck on a square body, and legs bent from endless riding. But although he was fierce in action, Henry's acts were generally directed towards peace and good order. He feared God, and had himself beaten by monks for his part in Becket's murder.

The danger to the king from a shocked and angry country was very great. And despair was added to the danger. His eldest son, Prince Henry, rebelled. Led on by some of the discontented barons, Prince Henry plotted with a younger brother, Richard. Although the king managed to defeat the rebellion, and a few years later Prince Henry died, there was then trouble with Richard. This son now led the opposition to the old king's rule. He was joined by the king of France and together they forced Henry to give up some of his French possessions. Then Richard was joined by a third son, John. Upset by his youngest and favourite son turning against him, Henry Plantagenet became half mad.

Already he had despaired of his wife Eleanor. Indeed there was little to thank her for, other than the French lands she had brought him at their marriage. She supported his sons in their rebellions and for most of his reign had refused to live with him. There is a story about Henry's unfaithfulness to her. When she was over fifty, Henry took as his lover a girl named Rosamond. Fearing that Eleanor would harm Rosamond, Henry hid her in a country house, far from court. But Eleanor discovered where she was, and had her killed, either with a knife or with poison.

Henry was at the end of a reign of 35 eventful years. He was ill from the struggle and soon he died. Then Eleanor saw her favourite son, Richard, crowned Richard I of England.

### *Richard I and the Third Crusade*

The Third Crusade was the result of the Turks again taking Jerusalem, this time under their famous leader Saladin (Salah ed-Din Ayyubi).

The Christian kingdom of Jerusalem had been guarded, for nearly a hundred years, by the military order of Knights Templar. This was an organization of knights coming together from several countries of western Europe. Saladin beat the Knights Templar; and the kings of



England, France and Germany called together armies to 'save' the Holy Land.

Richard I was a soldier. His people called him 'Coeur de Lion', which is French for 'the Lion-heart'. He had gained experience in the family wars and now wanted nothing better than to try his sword against the Turks. This was a holy war. It allowed Richard to tax the country for men and money and to form a better army of knights than his father had ever seen.

Knights were tested at tournaments. These were sports, held usually in a large open field near a county town. Knights in tournaments, or 'tourneys', rode or 'tilted' at each other with long and heavy spears called lances. The knights carried shields and wore chain mail—like that used at the battle of Hastings over 100 years earlier—although later in the middle ages 'plate' armour was used. Plate armour had a smooth surface against which the point of a lance slipped away to one side. The object of jousting, as the sport was called, was to knock the other knight off his horse; and then, if he stood fighting, sword or axe in hand, to hit at him until he fell to the ground.

A rich knight could keep a squire to look after his horse, his armour, and all his weapons. The squire, often a young boy, was himself sometimes waiting to be a knight. The eldest sons of great men must one day inherit their fathers' duties,<sup>1</sup> and they must be educated in the skills of war. Younger sons, who were not expected to inherit the family estate, must frequently make money out of fighting.

Some money could be made in the form of a mercenary's wages. But more money was often made in the form of ransoms. A ransom was money paid, by a knight's family, for that knight's return after capture. When a knight in battle was knocked on to the ground, his armour was so heavy that often he could not rise up again. He must stay there, and could be captured easily. A ransomed knight was a source of profit, but a dead one was not; so ransoms came to be regarded rather like prizes in sport.

<sup>1</sup> This feudal arrangement developed into the common system of inheritance in England; and this system forms the background to many English novels. Unless the father declares otherwise, his property passes to one heir only, his first-born son. Younger sons must generally find their own ways to wealth and position in society. (So must sons born to a woman who is not the father's wife.) Unmarried daughters were either kept by the family, or (at least until the 16th century) they became nuns.



The heralds, who were the officers controlling tournaments, called out the name of each knight who rode into the lists' or tilting field. The heralds could not see the faces of the knights, because they were covered by big pot helmets. But they could see the pattern or picture painted on each knight's shield. Each knight had his own 'coat of arms', as the pattern or picture was called. King Richard himself had the drawing of a lion. In the families of his barons and tenant knights, 'arms' were passed on with the estate from father to eldest son. Many inherited coats of arms are still held by the great families of England today.

Tournaments were colourful. They pleased the townspeople who came to watch, but they were for another purpose also. They served as a show of the outward sign of the knightly quality called chivalry. Chivalry was the total of all the best things in knightly character: strength and bravery, honour and loyalty, gentleness and purity in love. It demanded life-long service to God, the king, and one's family.

Chivalry was an ideal, and literature pretends that its followers were gentle, pure and kind.<sup>1</sup> In fact, most of the behaviour of medieval knights was the opposite. It was rough, evil and cruel. Chivalry applied only within the knightly class: knights were polite only to other knights. People in other classes, especially the poor, felt the very rough edge of chivalry's sword.

Chivalry was popular in war because it meant capturing other knights instead of killing them—or being killed oneself. It was popular also in peace, when it meant earning the love of some beautiful and noble lady, by a deed of boldness or of danger performed for her sake. There were many knights, called knights-errant, who spent much of their lives wandering over Europe, and even further, in search of suitable adventures. The Third Crusade, on which Richard I led many of the grandest knights in the country, seemed the greatest adventure of all.

It was, however, nearly as much a failure as the Second Crusade had

<sup>1</sup> In literature, the deeds of King Arthur and his 'knights' are usually described in terms of chivalry, as though they belong to the middle ages instead of centuries earlier. There was no ideal called chivalry in the real King Arthur's time. Similarly, Spenser set his 'Faerie Queene' at this time in the middle ages, instead of four centuries later.



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been. It failed to win back Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Islam continued to flower. The crusaders captured the port of Acre, but Richard quarrelled with the king of France, was captured when travelling home through Germany, and was held for ransom.

There is a legend which says that Richard had a servant named Blondel, whom he had left in England. When Blondel heard that his master was captured, he crossed the Channel to Europe and moved from castle to castle searching for him. One evening, while passing outside a high wall, he was singing a song which the king loved. The king heard it, and replied, so that all England could know he was still alive.

The ransom for Richard was large, and meant more taxes from the people. Already they had been milked for money to start the Crusade, and now one-quarter of all their remaining movable wealth was demanded from them.

Richard's brother John had already claimed the crown because the king was absent. He had made Richard's chancellor leave the country. Now he rebelled again. This time he was faced by the old queen, Eleanor, and a new chief minister, the archbishop of Canterbury, a careful man named Hubert Walter.

If Hubert Walter had been less loyal to Richard, and less wise, and less honest, he might have become a king-maker. Like Earl Godwine of Saxon times, he might have thought himself 'a power behind the throne'. But he and Eleanor stood by the old queen's eldest son, so that when Richard at last returned to England he found the kingdom safe.<sup>2</sup>

Richard stayed in England for only a few months. The French king had attacked Normandy, so Richard went to protect it. He never returned again. Within 5 years this tall and courageous man was dead, shot with a French arrow in his neck. There was no son to follow him. John was king.

### *King John and Magna Carta*

The soldier king Richard, the Lion-heart, had been seen in England

<sup>1</sup> Part of the reason was because, as described in Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman*, the crusaders could not agree on a common plan of action.

<sup>2</sup> Although Scott's *Ivanhoe* is about England at this time, the bad feelings between Saxon and Norman shown in the story belonged to an earlier age.



for only a few months during a reign of 10 years. Nevertheless, he is as famous with the English people as nearly any other king. The legend of Robin Hood, the popular outlaw of that time, contains the story of Richard going to Sherwood Forest to pardon Robin and all his men.

It is different with John. From popular legend we cannot imagine that cruel king pardoning anyone through kindness. He is the most hated ruler in English history; although he was not wholly bad.

It may be true that he ordered the murder of his nephew Arthur because he feared him as a rival to the throne. It is generally true that the Jews in England, who had lent money to Richard for his wars, were treated badly under John. It is certainly true that John thought himself above the law and used evil means for forcing money out of his people. Nevertheless, he ruled his country strongly at a time when, as under Stephen, it needed strong rule. Firm administration was needed because, in Richard's absence, the barons had grown bold again.

John began well by making his old enemy, Hubert Walter, chancellor. It was a good choice because the old man was a fine administrator. Under him, the Chancery began to keep copies of its writs—or orders—and other letters. These were written in Latin. The copies were kept on 'rolls' of parchment, tied carefully and stored, so that they became useful records of the law. In the same way, the 'pipe-rolls' of the Exchequer became useful as records of the government's income and expenses. The growth of the offices called Chancery and Exchequer was a step towards those similar departments in government and civil service which we know today.

Like his father, the great Henry II, John was a restless man. He was always travelling about his empire, trying to keep it out of the hands of the French king, whom he refused to accept as his liege-lord. For this purpose he needed money from his barons even more than his brother and father had needed it, because prices were rising. He tried to use his courts to get it, but the barons refused to pay. Few of them now had lands remaining in Normandy, and none of them trusted John in the same way that their fathers had trusted Henry II.

The barons were advised by a new archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, who was a good lawyer and man of business. Langton was appointed from Rome. John quarrelled even with the pope, because he did not like Langton, and was excommunicated.

John was a most unlucky and lonely king. He was known as John



Lackland—‘without land’. He had started with none and he ended with none. Everything he touched seemed to turn into dust at his hands. With the pope, the French king, and his barons all against him, he lost nearly every one of his French possessions. He lost Normandy and Anjou and Aquitaine. The Angevin empire was finished. His English barons, angry at the cost of the French war and frightened by the government’s unlawful methods of getting taxes, rose up in rebellion.

John wanted kingly rule; the barons wanted rule by the Great Council. They remembered the famous charter of Henry I. With the support of Stephen Langton, but against John’s wishes, a new charter was drawn up in the royal chancery. It was five times longer than Henry’s, and it became much more famous. It is known by its Latin name, *Magna Carta*.

On a summer’s day in the sixteenth year of John’s reign, at a field called Runnymede by the river Thames, the barons made John agree to this great charter. It said that he must govern only by known laws, or with the Council’s advice and permission. It also determined, among other things, the amount of death duty to be paid when a baron or knight died. It declared that any scutage paid to the king must be ‘reasonable’. And it demanded that the king’s officers should not take corn or other goods from anyone without immediate payment.

There were 63 rules altogether, all limiting the rights of the king. Not all of them were about taxes, however. Some re-stated ancient rights and freedoms, others improved the working of the law-courts, while others even allowed the barons to sit in judgment on the king’s own officers.

*Magna Carta* meant great changes in the feudal system. Even more important, however, was the charter’s influence on those in future centuries who stood against a ruler’s powers. It is still famous in democracies today. It points the way to government working not from fear of the people, but in acceptance of the people’s laws.

At that time, nevertheless, the charter was the tool of the barons, not of the common people. The barons who forced John to accept it were acting for themselves, and John thought it made him their slave. In the one year of life that remained to him, he twisted and turned with his army of mercenaries, trying to destroy the barons altogether. Legend says that then he lost even the crown of England, with all the



rest of his baggage, while crossing the marshes of that part of eastern England known as the Wash.

John Lackland died of dysentery, made worse by the hard life of marching, camping and over-working in that last year. When he died, the barons were stronger than ever. Some of them offered the crown to the French king's son. Nevertheless, more were faithful to the rightful prince, John's 9-year-old son, Henry.

There was a general feeling of national independence from France. It was growing even among the Norman-born upper class.

### *Government and people*

England was governed by a regency in the first 10 years of the boy king Henry's reign. That means a number of persons appointed to hold the kingdom in trust until the king was old enough to rule it. The idea was not new. Richard the Lion-heart had appointed regents while he was away fighting overseas.

The regents for Henry III were of course barons. When Henry became 19 he made the leader of them in the Great Council, a man named Hubert de Burgh, his chief minister. Within the next 5 years, however, he was looking for a way of throwing off de Burgh's control, in order to take power with his own hands. How did the young man manage it?

The two great departments of government, the Exchequer and the Chancery, had developed so much under John that it had become impossible for any king to continue to control them in detail. They were now in the care of civil servants appointed by the Great Council. The writs which they sent out were made official by means of a lump of wax pressed with the Great Seal of England.

The young Henry obtained his own seal, a 'privy' or private seal, which he used to make his own letters official. He kept it in a wardrobe, a small room next to the bedroom in whatever house he stayed in. It travelled with him, in the care of clerks of the wardrobe who managed his household affairs.

Henry was soon using these clerks to manage state affairs. For example, out of his wardrobe he spent money to pay knights and buy stores for the royal army. Rapidly 'the Wardrobe' became a new department of state. Writs under the privy seal gave the Chancery clerks authority to send out writs under the great seal. Other writs



reminded the Exchequer officials to collect tax money for the Wardrobe.

As this system developed, de Burgh's position and that of the rest of the baronial Council became less important. In the end, de Burgh lost his power altogether. The Wardrobe began to go past the Chancery and Exchequer, dealing direct with the judges and sheriffs of local government.

Everybody agreed that it was the king's duty to govern, although within the law and the provisions of Magna Carta. In particular, people looked to him to keep the peace, for there was much crime and violence. Most people carried weapons, in the towns, on the roads, and throughout the countryside, and even poor villeins owned knives and axes. Henry sent out a writ of 'watch and ward' which ordered the freemen of every borough and shire to form guards. They were to defend life and property in their towns and villages, especially during the hours of darkness.

Criminals, wrong-doers, were chased by 'hue and cry'—that is, by people of the town or village shouting and making every kind of noise. If the criminal reached a church, there he was safe, by the custom of 'sanctuary'. Men guilty of small crimes were put in the pillory or 'stocks'—a wooden rack with holes for the head, arms or feet—while bad fruit and vegetables were thrown at them. Women were tied to a chair at the end of a pole and dipped into the water of a pond.

The worst crime was treason—action against the king. The punishment for treason was to be 'hanged, drawn and quartered'. The criminal was hanged by the neck, his stomach was cut open and the inside parts taken out, and the rest of his body was cut into quarters. His head was then fixed up on a gate or wall or bridge for everyone to see. 'Heresy'—treason against the church—was punished by burning. Many innocent people were killed in these ways for purely political reasons. It was a rough age, and a wicked one. There were many crimes which were just as bad and cruel as the punishments described. People were surrounded by violence.

Much of the trouble faced by the county sheriffs was caused by knights. And most of it was about the tenancy of land. Justice at the hundred and shire moots could be obtained by the buying of a writ; and many of the king's writs were sold at a profit for the Wardrobe.

For example, a knight coming home from a crusade, or from the



French wars, might find that his holding had been seized by a strong neighbour. If he applied to the Chancery court for a writ, he could use it to get the local sheriff to summon—that is, call together—a jury to hear his case. Under the Normans, a knight whose possession of land was questioned by writ had defended it by ordeal—that is, by battle. But now the new assize courts offered trial by jury. Although it still took a long time to get a writ, and the delay itself sometimes led to fighting, the jury courts were popular and the government's sale of writs increased rapidly.

In this way the travelling judges were kept busy. When the assizes were held people were summoned by court writ to the county town to attend them. They came from the surrounding villages, some walking, others riding in carts or on horseback.

The roads were bad, especially in the dry dust of summer and the wet mud of winter. They wound through forests, over shaky bridges and round marshes, lakes and hills. The work of keeping a bridge safe from flooding rivers belonged to the lord on whose estate the bridge lay; and responsibility for seeing that the roads generally were kept safe also belonged to local lords. The way was usually kept wide enough for carts to pass and for groups of knights to ride together. Sometimes bushes were cut down and ditches were filled in to prevent robbers hiding in wait on each side. More often the roads were neglected, however. Travelling was both difficult and dangerous.

Nevertheless, many kinds of people used the roads. There were pilgrims, people on holiday, visiting holy places such as Canterbury to see the relics of ancient saints. There were merchants in long skirted clothes worn over tight leggings and pointed boots, leading lines of pack-horses laden with goods. There were wandering lawyers and doctors, carrying in their bags parchments and medicines which were often false and useless. There were poor students from the new universities of Oxford and Cambridge. There were men-at-arms clothed in rough deerskin or green woollen suits belted with leather. They were servants lower than a squire, but helmeted and wearing the coats of arms of their noble masters. And there were many, many beggars, singing and dancing, cheating and stealing, for their living.

Another frequent user of the roads was the summoner. He was a much feared man, the server of writs. Nobody must hinder his way on the road, because he might be in the service of the sheriff, a baron, a



bishop, an abbot or even the king. It was easy for him to get power to arrest anyone whom he said was guilty of treason or heresy.

Sometimes a franklin passed by on a donkey. He was a free-man from the shires on his way to do business in the town and he represented the beginning of a middle class which was buying its way out of the feudal system. Sometimes a mason passed by, carrying plans for a new castle or church, or a public building or bridge, to be built from brick or stone, as ordered by the local baron or bishop or borough council. Sitting at a crossroads there might be a pedlar, selling from his box ornaments, pins, caps, hats, pots, bags, belts and knives. Or, where a road went through the shallow part of a river, there might be a hermit, a lonely man, dirty and with long hair and beard, waiting to guide the traveller across the water in exchange for a bite of bread. In another place, away from the road as it passed through a wood, there might be the hut of another hermit under a tree, waiting to give travellers shelter from the rain.

Help could also be obtained from friars, holy men different from monks because they worked among the people. Jesus Christ had told his followers to go out and preach that he would forgive their sins—bad acts against God's laws. Two holy men, Francis in Italy and Dominic in Spain, had said that this was best done by men without money. They should ask for bread and clothes from those to whom they taught Christ's message. A friar asked only for a wooden hut to live in, and then he was ready to work among the poorest people in the fields and towns.

The Franciscans (grey friars) and Dominicans (black friars) were followed to England by two other orders, the Carmelites (white friars) and the Augustinian or Austin friars. The monks and parish priests did not like any of them, because they saw them as rivals. Later, when the friars themselves became rich and fat and well educated, they liked them even less.

Religion was very close to the people of the middle ages. At a time when people could be led to believe most things, there were the pardoners, who sold 'indulgences'—forgiveness for sins. The pardoners spoke loudly, and persuaded their hearers to pay good money for these indulgences or written pardons which, of course, were worth no more than the paper they were written on. Some of the pardoners carried 'relics' which, they said, were straight from Palestine or Rome.



People paid to touch these 'relics'—perhaps the pardoner's own toenails which he said were those of a saint—in the hope of a magical cure from illness. A pardoner's profits were large if he was a good salesman.

There were also palmer, pilgrims returned from the Holy Land, who told unlikely stories about their travels in exchange for money. They were named from the palm leaves which they carried as proof of their travels in the east. People enjoyed their stories, whether they believed them or not.

### *The towns and trade*

The roads were particularly busy at market-time. The lords of manors depended on the town markets for the sale of their crops, after they had stored enough for their own needs—just as Asian and African farmers sell their extra rice, corn and sugar in the nearest market today. Some of the Norman barons had developed their own towns as safe places in which to sell produce from their estates. Then, to guard these towns, they had- built their castles there.

Most of the towns were ringed with a wall, a wooden fence or an earth bank for defence. Inside the town, the houses were often built very close together. Most of the smaller buildings were built of wood, with roofs made of straw. There was always danger from fire. Most of the streets were narrow and earthy, with a ditch for waste and rubbish dug along the middle. Cows, pigs and chicken wandered around each street, feeding on rubbish from the ditch.

The windows in houses on either side of a street were open in summer and boarded shut in winter. There was no glass. The traders sat inside, making goods on order, because they kept no stocks. Men working at the same trade or business generally sat in the same street. In particular, the Jewish money-lenders usually lived close together. They were much disliked, although they were often needed because they were the main bankers of that time. There were several big riots against Jews at the end of the twelfth century, when many were attacked and killed by crowds of trouble-makers.

Each town had its market-place—a large open area to which animals could be brought and in which traders could put up tents and rough wooden tables, from which they sold their goods. There were regular weekly or monthly markets; and larger markets or fairs were held



once or twice a year in a nearby field. At fairs, rich people bought spices and cloth and wine imported from abroad, while poorer people bought local beer and perhaps some fruit. There was entertainment for all: dancing and singing in the open air, tricks or magic, cock-fighting, bear-baiting (attacking a bear with dogs), stage plays and perhaps a tournament.

People went to the towns for employment in the same way as in many countries today, and they were willing to work for very small wages. Many of them were escaping from the much harder conditions of village life. A serf or a villein who had run away from a lord's village became a free-man if he was able to stay uncaptured in a town for a year and a day. He had escaped from the feudal system. His lord could not take him back. He was given protection by the borough court.

The borough courts were controlled by the leading townspeople—or 'burgesses', as they were called. Although protecting escaped villagers meant keeping cheap labour for the towns, the main purpose of these courts was to settle cases between traders. Nothing must stand in the way of the general development of trade.

The borough courts were made lawful by charter. Some of the old Saxon boroughs started by King Alfred had received a kind of charter, giving the burgesses limited rights of self-government together with certain trading advantages. Each of the Cinque Ports—Hastings, Sandwich, Dover, Romney and Hythe on the south coast—had been building ships for the king since the Norman Conquest, and each was controlled by its own warden, or local officer. In exchange for this service, these towns with local wardens were given tax reliefs and independence from some of the royal laws. To the cinque (five) ports Richard I added Winchelsea and Rye, making them seven.

The Norman and Plantagenet kings sold charters in the same way that they sold writs. Henry I and Henry II both sold charters to London. Richard and John, who were always short of money, sold charters to a great many other towns. They gave permission, in exchange for a large sum of money, to the burgesses to collect taxes for the treasury of the borough council. The mayor of the council then paid the agreed sum each year, either to the sheriff or direct to the government exchequer.

Borough charters sometimes brought other advantages, Henry III's



charter to Liverpool, for example, promised a merchant's guild. This meant the royal recognition of an association of burgesses working together. Such associations, called guilds, were not new. Many had been started in Saxon days. Their purpose was to increase trade and develop industry. In fact there were two main kinds: merchants' guilds and craft guilds, representing trade and industry. The guild officials elected by the burgesses were the mayor, bailiff, reeve and aldermen. Their responsibility was to see that the guild's rules were obeyed.

The aim of these rules was to make sure of fair profits. This meant that nobody who was not a member of the guild should be allowed to trade. Only then could prices and wages be controlled by agreement. The merchant guild of Leicester fixed prices for wool. The craft guild of cloth-makers in London fixed wages. In many towns guilds became so powerful that they managed all matters of business and industry.

It was the charter towns with strong guilds that developed quickest. Not all of them had royal charters. Sometimes a baron using a town as a market-place for the produce of his estates, gave it a charter of his own. A baronial charter promised the burgesses rights and customs similar to those enjoyed by burgesses in towns controlled by the king.

Although charters and other legal parchments were written in Latin, and the noble classes still spoke French, the language of the people was now a mixture of Saxon English ('Old' English) and French. This mixture, 'Middle' English, is a language which is difficult to understand today, but it was a lively language which made possible the growth of literature and spread of ideas.<sup>1</sup> And the French words in Middle English helped the ordinary merchant to trade with Europe.

It was the rivers that made it cheap for the merchants in towns to send goods overseas. London on the Thames, Newcastle on the Tyne, Hull on the Humber, and Lincoln on the Witham in the east; Liverpool on the Mersey and Bristol on the Avon in the west—all sent ships down to the sea. The English Channel had become a highway. From south coast ports such as Dover and Southampton, ships sailed with cargoes of wool, corn, cheese and salted meat. They came back laden with cloth, gipld and silver, Mediterranean fruits, wine, and spices from eastern lands.

<sup>1</sup> The greatest literary work written in England in the middle ages, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, is in Middle English.



But none of the towns was really big. Except for London, their average population was about 3,000 citizens each. After London came York (a centre for wool), Coventry, Bristol and Norwich. Manchester and Liverpool had only about 150 houses each. The old midlands borough of Leicester, also well known for its wool, was probably even smaller.

### *Henry III and the beginning of Parliament*

The history of Parliament is connected with a man named Simon de Montfort, who was earl of Leicester at that time.

Simon de Montfort was, as his name suggests, a Frenchman by birth. Henry III had won back large parts of France and had given appointments at court to a number of Frenchmen who had fought for him. Simon de Montfort was one of the foreigners whom the king now favoured more than his English barons. This favourite married the king's sister and quickly rose to power.

He was a man of great skill and boldness. He never feared to make enemies of people who stood in his way. Even the king began to worry, and then to fear him—even more, it is said, than thunder and lightning. When de Montfort began to criticize the king's policies, there was a quarrel, and Henry began to listen to other barons who were de Montfort's enemies.

The increasing wealth of the nation and the breakdown of the feudal system had given importance to a new social class, a 'middle' class consisting of leading burgesses and tenant knights. It became a custom to call knights of the shire to certain meetings of the Great Council. These meetings soon became a centre for discussion, a parliament (from the French *parler*, to talk).

Simon de Montfort became the leader of a party of these knights. At first the king's son, Prince Edward, joined with him. Later, however, when de Montfort's party threatened war, Edward joined his father again. Together they formed a strong royalist party of barons to stand against this powerful man.

The parties took up weapons and met at Lewes in Sussex. Here de Montfort showed himself a good soldier. Henry, Edward, and all the royal court were captured. Simon de Montfort obtained control of the government.

Now de Montfort, in order to earn the widest support possible,



summoned a parliament of barons and knights. A few months later he summoned another, this time adding burgesses from several towns. He was applying the practice of the moot—the common meeting which had existed locally since Saxon times.

However, the effort to obtain support failed. Many of the barons refused to come. Prince Edward escaped, called the more powerful barons to him, and defeated and killed de Montfort in a fierce battle at a place called Evesham in Worcestershire.

Although the king was now back in power, the parliamentary experiment had made its mark. Prince Edward continued it when he became king. Two knights from each county were summoned, and two burgesses from each town. Under future kings, the custom grew. It continued calling to council not only the barons, but persons to represent the ‘commons’—that is, the common people. At first it was only a way of telling these leading citizens what new taxes to expect. They listened; but they did not talk. The government did not ask them for advice. However, they went away and talked, and their secret meetings developed over the centuries into a ‘House of Commons’. Simon de Montfort had no idea of democracy as it is known today, but the moot and the council are both origins of the modern parliament.

The remaining years of Henry III were years of peace, although in a few places the followers of de Montfort continued to stand against the government. The country was in fact ruled by Prince Edward, for the king in his old age became a weak, simple man. He reminded some people of that other lover of peace, Edward the Confessor, who had built the abbey at Westminster. In honour of the Saxon Edward, Henry rebuilt Westminster Abbey; and in that holy place, within new glass windows which let in the sun’s light but kept out the rain, Henry was buried.

He had been king for 56 years. During his reign, feudal rule had begun to change into rule by national law which the crown must obey. ‘Those who are ruled by the laws know the laws best,’ said one writer of that time. The country’s break from the European system was beginning.

People now felt different from the rest of Europe. ‘England for the English,’ they said, when foreigners came in. There was pride in the land and a common loyalty to it. And that was true not only of the



barons, who had most to gain or lose, but of the new middle class. The nation was growing up.

### *The first 'United Kingdom'*

The new king, Edward I, was in Europe when his father died. For two years he had been away in the Holy Land, on yet another of Christian Europe's crusades against Islam. Two more years passed before he returned to England to be crowned. (Nevertheless, so that 'the king's peace' would be kept, he was declared king on the same day that his father died. 'The king is dead,' the heralds cried: 'Long live the king!' This became the rule with later kings also, so that the time taken to plan the coronation—the ceremony of crowning—would pass without argument about who the next king would be.)

Thus Edward I was a soldier. In later years he also proved himself to be a great king.

A medieval king was more than a national ornament, to be admired and perhaps loved by his people. He was expected to rule as a government does today, helping to increase national wealth, providing justice and safety, and making the nation strong in the world.

Edward I did all this. He encouraged the rising middle class. He dismissed bad sheriffs and judges. He reduced crime by extending the police system of 'watch and ward'. He controlled the barons.

He did much of this through Parliament. He summoned knights and burgesses, told them his policy, and then asked for men and money to carry it out. Laws which appeared under the name of the King-in-council-in-Parliament were obeyed more willingly than those under the old system. Edward wanted soldiers and the taxes with which to pay them. But he also wanted the people to take part willingly in the building of a new nation. By using Parliament, he made the crown and throne stronger than ever before.

Part of Edward's policy of making his country strong in the world was to extend his government's power through the whole island. Earlier Plantagenet kings had been so busy with their possessions in France that both Wales and Scotland had been allowed to continue generally independent of the English throne. In both countries there were peoples who fought each other besides raiding occasionally across the English border. The Welsh tribes were Celts, driven west at the time of the Saxon invasions.



In the thirteenth century, lands along the border—or ‘marches’—of Wales were held by a few baronial families who had farmed them since the days of the Norman Conquest. These ‘marcher lords’, as they were called, were less under the control of the king than his other earls were. A few had become quite Welsh themselves and had married Welsh women.

Generally, however, the marcher lords were loyal to the English crown. Most of them had supported Henry III and Edward against de Montfort.

One of de Montfort’s supporters had been a leader of the Celtic tribes. His name was Llewellyn, and he called himself Prince of Wales. Llewellyn (pronounced Thlewelin) demanded that the tribal chiefs pay duty to him rather than to the English king. His main enemies were the marcher lords. Their rich estates were often raided by the tribes.

The Celts of the hills and mountains were quick and active people. They were determined to keep their independence from the heavy Englishmen. They had developed, and made perfect, the use of a new weapon of war: the long-bow. The long-bow was different from other bows because it was almost as tall as the man who shot it. When drawing back the string, the bowman—or archer—leant the whole weight of his body into the wood. The arrow flew with such power that chain mail was of little use against it. Unlike the cross-bow, which had to be wound up, arrows could be fitted to the long-bow very quickly. A good archer could also shoot very straight. When Edward invaded Wales, and during the war which followed, the English learned how to use the long-bow. Later we shall see how useful it was to them.

Edward I and the marcher lords surrounded Llewellyn and his army in the north Welsh mountains around Mount Snowdon. Cut off from their sheep lands, the Welshmen on the high slopes were starved of food. Llewellyn, realizing that his position was hopeless, stopped resisting.

The next few years were used by the English in building huge stone castles from which to control the country. They were much stronger than the old Norman castles. Wherever possible they were built on rising ground for defence. Where the land was flat, a moat or deep ditch was dug round the outer wall and filled with water.



When Llewellyn rebelled again, after 5 years, he was faced with the problem of attacking the strongest defences ever built in Britain. Each completed castle presented the same kind of difficulty. The only way across a moat was by a drawbridge. But that was pulled up against the main gate long before the first bunch of attacking soldiers could reach it. Then, behind the pulled-up drawbridge, was a great iron fence let down by chains to protect the main gate. This iron fence was called the portcullis. Behind the portcullis were the two heavy doors of the main gate, strongly barred from behind. Some castles even had a fortified area, called 'the barbican', in front of the main gate.

The high and thick walls of most castles had towers at each corner, and there might be others round the barbican. The walls of the rooms and stairs within the towers were cut with narrow holes through which the defenders could shoot down cross-ways at the attackers outside below. At the top of the towers and the walls joining them, there were battlements from which the defenders could not only shoot but throw down rocks and pour down boiling oil. Even if the attackers managed to raise ladders to the battlements or break down the side—or 'postern'—gates, the men who got over or through and into the central courtyard still had to face arrows shot from the keep. The keep was a high, wide tower—the strongest of them all, with its own battlements.

Many castles of this sort were also built by kings and barons in England in the coming years. Some of them are still standing today. They must have been very cold and damp to live in, for they were difficult to heat properly. The floors and ceilings in the tower-rooms were stone. The wind blew thinly down the winding stairs and along the passage-ways set inside the main walls.

The Welsh fought hard for their independence, and it was several months before Llewellyn's rebellion was defeated and Llewellyn was killed. Edward I now declared that he was the direct ruler of the Welsh people. He had his own baby son crowned Prince of Wales. Since that time the title 'Prince of Wales' has been given to the eldest son of every English king.

The conquest of Wales by King Edward and his lords was followed by a 'Round Table' ceremony. People were reminded of the great deeds of King Arthur and his knights. Edward encouraged his young officers to think about the joys of knighthood, tournaments and



chivalry, because it gave them pride in fighting. Youths were educated to believe that Edward's, and England's, reasons for battle were always right. It was an honour to carry the royal flag, or 'standard', into war.

A squire's whole education was intended to make him fit for a life of chivalrous service to his lord and king. He was taught to speak well and to move with grace, to sing and dance prettily, to play music on stringed instruments, and to hunt with horse and hawk. But he seldom learned to read or write. Book knowledge was more for church-men and for clerks.

Young boys were made into knights with all the ceremony of the days of Richard, Coeur de Lion. The night before the ceremony was spent in a church, praying. Then the youth was bathed to make him pure. On his knees before the king, he was touched lightly on the shoulder with a sword and was given his spurs. The spurs, a pair of sharp fastenings fixed to his heels when riding, were a special mark of knighthood.

Many people thought of King Edward as almost the perfect knight. He was tall, good-looking, and active in both sport and battle. Above all, until now he had been successful. But now he made his one great mistake: he decided to attack Scotland.

National feeling in Scotland was even stronger than in Wales. The Scottish countryside was mountainous over a far wider area and therefore more difficult to conquer. The population was larger and it was better organized. It had leaders even better than Llewellyn had been in Wales.

The king of Scotland, who did duty to Edward I, died leaving no son. The two chief persons to claim the throne were an old Scottish baron named Robert Bruce and a younger noble named John Baliol. Edward supported Baliol, who was duly crowned King John of Scotland.

Edward tried to rule Scotland through Baliol, but Baliol and the Scots resisted. The Scottish army was led by an outlaw knight named Sir William Wallace, who defeated an English army at the battle of Stirling Bridge and soon afterwards entered England. Meanwhile Edward himself was at war in France. He had told John Baliol to do him duty, and he in turn was now being reminded by the French king Philip that he owed duty to Philip as his feudal overlord.

Hearing the news of Stirling Bridge, Edward made a hasty peace



with Philip, called together the feudal armies of England and Wales, and hurried north.

He met Wallace in a large open field near the village of Falkirk in the low-lying country of south Scotland. At first the attacks made by his knights ended in destruction on the solid lines of Scottish spears. But then Edward called for his Welsh archers to aim at the weakest points in Wallace's army. The long-bow arrows sang as they split the air, and gaps soon appeared in the Scottish defence. The knights fought forward through the gaps and drove the beaten Scots back into some neighbouring woods. Most of the Scots managed to escape among the trees.

The battle of Falkirk had been won with Welsh arrows, and from now on every young Englishman would practise with the long-bow regularly. For Edward it had been a useful victory, although the war was not yet over. Wallace was still free and Scotsmen everywhere were still resisting.

The English slowly strengthened their position as the years went by. The armies fought in the summer and rested in the winter. Edward captured Stirling Castle. Then Wallace was captured by a trick, taken to Westminster and killed. A large stone, taken from the village of Scone where Scottish kings were crowned, was carried to Westminster Abbey. It is still there, and forms part of the British coronation throne.

But the war did no good to England. People were overweighted with taxes to pay for it. Whenever Edward turned his back and rode south, it always started again. And now it suddenly became more dangerous.

Robert Bruce, the grandson of Baliol's rival, had killed Edward's chief officer in Scotland. A month later Bruce was crowned king at Scone. Edward was old and ill, but he was determined to put down this latest threat to his power. He immediately sent an army north. Bruce was defeated but escaped to an island between Scotland and Ireland.

Here, so Scottish legend says, Bruce found shelter in a cave. He was in despair. He had been defeated, his friends were scattered, and the English were strong. As he lay on the cave's hard floor, thinking how difficult it would be to regain his power, he saw a spider above him spinning its web. Again and again the spider slipped from the web, and again and again it climbed up a line of the web until the whole



web was completed. Bruce took courage from the spider and returned to Scotland in a new attempt to complete his own work.

Edward was too ill to lead another army himself. Nevertheless, he tried. He had himself carried north, but died before he could reach the border.

Castle after castle now fell into Scottish hands, until only Stirling Castle remained. The new English king, Edward II, was lazy. He was not eager to make the effort required to hold together the new 'United Kingdom'. He neglected the threat to his northern power for 7 fatal years, while Robert Bruce grew stronger.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 2

ENGLAND	REST OF EUROPE	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
		1067-75	
William I (1066-87)	attacks Ireland	Turks in Jerusalem	Murabit emirate
		1076-1100	
William II (1087-1100)		First Crusade	Berbers in Ghana
		1101-25	
Henry I (1100-35)	takes Normandy	Kingdom of Jerusalem	Incas at Cuzco Almoravid empire
		1126-50	
Stephen (1135-54)		Second Crusade	Muwahid caliphate
		1151-75	
Henry II (1154-89)	Frederick Barbarossa	Nureddin	Saladin in Egypt
		1176-1200	
Richard I (1189-99)		Third Crusade	Ayyubid sultanate Almohad empire
		1201-25	
John (1199-1216)		Fourth Crusade	Aztecs in Mexico
		1226-50	
Henry III (1216-72)	Frederick II	Gengiz Khan	Hafsid caliphate Sundiata
		1251-75	
First parliaments	Rudolf of Hapsburg	Kublai Khan	Mayapan empire Kanem-Bornu
		1276-1300	
Edward I (1272-1307)	Charles of Anjou	'The Golden Horde'	Guinea states



## *The Fight for Power*

### *The failure of Edward II*

The last years of his famous father's reign had left Edward II with many problems. One was lack of money.

Although trade and industry had grown, land was still the source of most wealth. As more and more tenants began to pay rent for their holdings, it was realized that holdings were a form of property. They could also be bought and sold; but the land itself could not be sold because the law said it all belonged to the king. A new holder must continue to pay the socage or scutage that went with the estate, although the sale of it could usually be made with profit. The value of land was increasing along with the increasing pressure of population on it. The king's income from it was not increasing, however.

A few estates had been bought by Jews. But the Jews were foreigners. Also, they were hated by many of the people who were in debt to them. The idea that foreigners could hold English land made many more people angry. The Jews suffered much cruelty. Under Edward I most of them had been sent out of the country. The economy was damaged, but the law for the next 350 years would be against their return.

Plantagenets since Richard I had borrowed money from the Jews. English and visiting Italian merchants also lent money to Plantagenet kings, but only when events were going well and the government seemed likely to repay. Under Edward II, events were going badly.

The barons particularly were displeased with events, and this was Edward's second problem. They had formed themselves into an organization called 'the Lords Ordainers'. It was like a political party, and its aim was to take the government out of the hands of the king's household servants. Some of these, using the office of the Wardrobe to press forward with the king's work, had become very powerful. The king's favourite among them was a young man named Piers Gaveston. This proud fellow was, like the great Simon de Montfort, by birth a Frenchman.



Gaveston was given the title Earl of Cornwall: He was powerful at court and used his position to insult the Lords Ordainers. He called one of their leaders, the Earl of Warwick, 'a black dog' and was foolish enough to use the king's guards to try to fight them. They surrounded him in a castle at Scarborough but agreed to spare his life. Warwick, however, would not agree. He later caught the king's favourite and had his head cut off his shoulders.

Edward now became the bitter enemy of all the Lords Ordainers, particularly of their leader Thomas of Lancaster, who was his own cousin. Edward's basic enemy, however, was his own weak character. He was no good at politics or at war. He liked music, play-acting, swimming and sports which exercised his fine body. Now he thought that the only way to stand against his enemies at home was to win popularity by a great victory abroad. He decided to attack Robert Bruce in Scotland.

When the new king marched north, with the idea of relieving the castle of Stirling, Thomas of Lancaster and the Lords Ordainers refused to provide him with men or money. Nevertheless, Edward managed to cross the border with 20,000 men and reach the Bannock burn or stream just south of the surrounded castle. There was Bruce with 10,000 Scotsmen on a low hill the other side of the stream. An English knight moved forward with some Welsh soldiers in an attempt to join the English in the castle. Bruce attacked them with a few men but fought the knight alone, striking him from his horse with a battle-axe.

Making only poor use of the lesson learned at Falkirk, Edward did not use his archers until it was too late. The English knights charged across the burn and up the bank and into the Scottish spearmen with a great crash of breaking lances, shields and falling horses. When the archers shot, the two armies were so mixed that they hit as many of their own men as of the enemy. Bruce, who was a good soldier, charged Edward's archers with his own horsemen and drove them back.

Then the Scottish camp-followers, mostly cooks and servants and boys, appeared suddenly on a hill shouting and waving flags. Thinking that this was the start of another Scottish attack, the English army turned and ran, many being killed by Scots horsemen as they struggled across the burn.

The battle of Bannockburn, as it was named, was more than a revenge for Falkirk. It was one of the greatest defeats in war that



England has ever suffered. It left Bruce free to raid the whole of northern England, which he did with great cruelty. It kept Scotland separate from England for the next three centuries. It formed the basis of a friendship between Scotland and France that worried England for even longer.

It was ruin for Edward II. Although after some years he managed to defeat the Ordainers and take Thomas of Lancaster's head in revenge for Gaveston's, and although he found new favourites in a father and son both named Hugh Despenser, he was never truly king again. The Despensers were hated because they were greedy. The marcher lords, from among whom the Despensers came, feared particularly their taking lands in south Wales.

One of these marcher lords, Roger Mortimer, escaped to France. There he became the lover of Edward's wife Isabella. She was the sister of the French king of that time, and was in Paris talking with her brother about the future of the English possession of Gascony in the French south-west. She was disgusted with her husband Edward because of the love he had shown to Gaveston and the love he now showed for the younger Hugh Despenser.

Isabella became known as 'the she-wolf of France'. She and Mortimer planned to destroy Edward. They reached England with a small army and were joined by many barons who were tired of Edward's bad government. The Despensers, both father and son, were quickly hunted down and killed. Edward himself was locked up in Berkeley Castle. Later he was murdered there.

But the equally bad government of Mortimer and Isabella did not last long. Mortimer used his power to get more lands in Wales. He gave himself the title Earl of March. The new king, Edward's and Isabella's son Edward III, was a brave boy. He commanded that Mortimer should be arrested for his father's murder.

Mortimer was seized in a bedroom next to Isabella's. Edward was only 18 but he was married and had a baby son. He was a king; clearly it was his duty to act like one. He declared that he had taken over the government. He sent Mortimer to be hanged like a thief at Tyburn near London.<sup>1</sup> His mother, Isabella, was shut away for life. Later she became a nun.

<sup>1</sup> Thieves, rebels, traitors and heretics were, for six centuries, commonly hanged by the neck in public at Tyburn.



In this unpleasant way there began one of the longest and greatest reigns of all the Plantagenet kings, although for Edward personally it was all to end in despair.

### *At war with France*

In many ways Edward III was like Edward I. He loved the idea of chivalry and was skilled in tournaments. Also he wanted a true king's power, and he looked for it in war.

Then, as now, it was good politics to remove public attention from troubles at home by directing it towards foreign affairs. A quarrel with France was the answer for Edward, because a new French king was demanding feudal duty from him for his possessions there.

There were several good reasons for a quarrel. France had supported Bruce and the Scots. France threatened the towns of Flanders, where the Flemish (Belgian) merchants were good customers for English wool. French pirates sometimes raided English ports. Above all, France claimed the English possessions of Gascony and Ponthieu. Both these areas were good markets for English corn, cloth, fish and tin.

Slowly Edward III moved towards a war which was going to last, with few interruptions, for about 100 years. Fighting began in Flanders and the English won a sea victory near the port of Sluys. Then Edward, reminding the French that his mother Isabella was the sister of an earlier French king, claimed for himself the crown of France.

Successful wars were always popular, and suddenly there was great eagerness to make this one successful. The prizes seemed great for all who joined the king in raiding the rich villages of the French countryside. Edward was able to land an army in Normandy and to march eastwards to the river Seine. He almost reached the walls of Paris before turning north to join his friends, the wool merchants in Flanders.

Edward's army, although not large, was one of the strongest Europe had seen. It was not like the old feudal army, based on the duty owing from land tenure, with enfeoffed knights and foot-soldiers dragged unwilling from their fields. This was an army with professional knights who were paid for their services, and yeomen who were free peasants out for gain. It was an army that has been described as 'the mirror of a nation, not of a class'. The way was becoming open for the clever and hard-working yeoman to improve his position. He could



become quite rich if he farmed well. With the prizes of war he could improve his chances still further.

The yeomen of Edward's army carried the best weapon yet seen on a European battle-field: the long-bow. Their fathers' fathers had brought it home from Wales, 60 years before. A long-bow was almost as tall as the man who held it. It was cut from the yew-tree's wood and was served by arrows winged with grey and white goose-feathers. When these yeomen were boys, they and their fathers had practised with long-bows after church on Sundays, on the village green.<sup>1</sup> Now, for many months, they had been cutting arrows and packing them in open-ended leather cases, called quivers. Each yeoman-archer now had a full quiver hanging behind his shoulder; and in his left hand he held his bow.

The French army lying in wait to destroy Edward was about three times bigger than his. Having failed to trap him as he crossed the river Seine, it now followed him north towards the coast. It was led by the French king himself and included thousands of heavily armoured knights, all the finest of French chivalry. The English could not escape. At Crecy village in Ponthieu, 50 miles south of Calais, on an open slope of ground, they turned to fight.

It was already evening when the enemy archers moved forward to shoot at the English lines. They wound up their cross-bows and shot; but the sun was shining in their eyes. The solid ranks of yeomen archers, the sun behind them, then stepped forward to show what their long-bows could do. Their arrows flew with such force and quickness that it was like watching a sudden shower of rain.

Now the French knights rode forward, men and horses both heavily armoured and richly dressed. Showers of steel-tipped arrows fell upon them too, entering their mail and killing their horses. As the wounded nobles lay on the ground, unable to rise in their heavy armour, the English foot-soldiers ran forward and killed them.

One group of French knights did get past the English archers. It pushed towards Edward's son, the young Prince of Wales. Some of the gentlemen near the prince were afraid that he might be overcome and rode off to ask the king for help. But Edward refused to send forward his reserve force of knights. 'Let the boy win his spurs,' he

<sup>1</sup> It was at this time that stories about Robin Hood first became popular in England.



said. The 16-year-old youth had been knighted only recently, although afterwards he became famous as a great soldier. He became known as the Black Prince, possibly from the colour of the armour he wore on that day.

Darkness came over the battle-field. The heaps of dead and wounded French knights grew. Still more charged up, to end their lives in front of the English line. At last, after 15 or 16 mass attacks had failed, the shouting and the crashing came to an end. The broken wreck of the once splendid army of France crawled away with its wounded. The time was after midnight. There was no moon. When morning came the tired English soldiers were astonished at the number of French that lay dead before them. Over 1,500 bodies of knights and squires were counted where they lay, among 10,000 common soldiers dead. The English had lost only 40 dead.

Small guns were used at Crecy. The flames and smoke and the iron balls were frightening, but they did not have much real effect. There were too few of them. The battle was won by the British long-bow arrows.

The victors marched on towards the coast. They surrounded the important coastal town of Calais. The citizens defended the town bitterly, but they had no food and after a few months were forced to open its gates to Edward and his army. Shortly afterwards, the French king offered peace.

The war until now had brought only little reward to the English: a famous victory, and the possession of a good French port. The yeomen complained because the wealth for which they had been searching was not there. Most of them had got sixpence a day for service, but nothing more. The knights too had been cheated of their ransoms because so many of their wounded prizes had been killed on the battle-field.

However, there was one man, above all, who lived only for war itself. That was the Black Prince. His father, being always glad to strengthen ideas of chivalry, had formed 25 knights into a kind of club called the Order of the Garter. Knights who were members of this order followed the French saying, *Honi soit qui mal y pense*—‘May evil be to him who evil thinks’. The Black Prince was filled with the noble ideas of the Garter and of chivalry, and he was determined to use them profitably in war.



The peace lasted for 8 years, but then the Prince's chance came. His father ordered him to advance from the English colony of Gascony into Aquitaine. He did this with success, capturing much wealth before setting fire to the towns and villages through which he passed. However, a new French king, hoping to revenge the defeat at Crécy, had gathered together a fresh army about four times larger than the Prince's. The English were on their way back to Gascony, loaded with stolen riches. The two armies met near the town of Poitiers, where the English were forced to fight.

The story was much the same as at Crécy, except that the French attacked without horses, to avoid the long-bow arrows. They came very near to winning, too. Most of the fighting was hand-to-hand. The English would have been overcome if the Black Prince had not sent his horsemen at the right moment to strike at the enemy with lances and swords and ball-and-chain.

Again a huge French army was ruined. The French king was captured, and this was the Black Prince's opportunity to cover the ugliness of medieval war with the glory of chivalry. He treated his royal prisoner with great ceremony, placing him in his own tent, seating him in his own chair, and serving him at dinner. He took the king back with him to England. There he put him, finely clothed, on a white horse for his ride through the streets to the Tower of London. Honour, as the English say, had been done.

The victory at Poitiers led to another few years of peace. Edward III was recognized as ruler of Gascony and Aquitaine, and of Calais with the neighbouring area of Ponthieu. He need no longer do duty for them as fief to the king of France. And, best of all, the French had to pay a huge ransom for the return of their king.

It seemed as if England need never bow to France again.

### *Trouble on the land*

But the French war had affected the island's farming wealth. Men had gone from the land to fight the war, and many of those who returned to England found other ways of living. The sale of wool and corn to markets overseas had been interrupted. Land-lords, heavily taxed, were now spending less to develop their estates.

The country's economy had been damaged also by the worst act of nature ever suffered by the English people. That was the Black Death,



which swept both countryside and town in the years between Crécy and Poitiers.

The Black Death was bubonic plague, a disease which had raced across Europe from Turkey. Further east in Asia, it had been known for a long time. It was named the Black Death from the dark colour it left the body after death. Like most forms of plague, it was carried by small insects called fleas living in the fur of rats. These small animals arrived in England in ships returning from trade in Europe and from serving the French war. There was no cure. The body became fevered and swelled; and, in great pain, the affected person died. Nobody was safe from death by plague.

English society at that time was led by about 25 great lords (dukes, earls, abbots and bishops). Under them were about 40 barons of lower rank, families with large but local estates. Below them was a caste of about 1,000 knights, each with an estate and a family coat of arms. They were proud of being 'upper' class. Then came thousands of poorer country gentlemen, burgesses and franklins, all of them 'middle' class and known as 'the gentry'. Beneath the gentry was the mass of the lower or 'working' class, including the poorer yeomen, the villeins and the serfs.

Lowest of all were the serfs. The serf was regarded, by people at the top of the social scale, as not much better than an animal. Indeed, he lived with animals. 'His head,' we are told, 'was big and blacker than smoked meat. The flat part of your hand could easily be put between his two eyes. He had very large cheeks and a great flat nose. His lips were redder than uncooked flesh, and his teeth were yellow and foul.' God had chained him to the soil and now chose to strike him with the plague.

But all classes suffered. Nobody knows how many people—knights and merchants, yeomen and serfs, their wives and children—died in the two years the Black Death was at its worst in England. Possibly the total population of about 4 million was reduced by over a third.

The towns inside their walls were too small. Hundreds of poor people had been crowding into them in search of a better life than the land could provide. The houses were tall and close together; sunlight and fresh air seldom reached the narrow streets. People of all classes wore heavy woollen clothes, full of fleas, and seldom took them off.



When plague attacked a town, its citizens had one thought: 'Go quick, go far, and come back late.'

So people ran from the towns to their villages for relief. They carried the fleas with them and spread the plague through the countryside. Men fell as they ploughed the fields and drove their herds, until the land itself seemed dying. Neglected sheep and cows wandered over the commons and through the crops, many dying in the ditches when there were no herdsmen to care for them. The land-lords, with too few workers left, watched their corn and their vegetables ripen and waste away unharvested.

The Black Death touched everywhere and affected everyone. The craft and merchant guilds lost control in the towns, as the workshops closed. Students were turned away from the universities, as their teachers died. Half the monks in Westminster Abbey died. Priests and friars who nursed the sick also died. New parish churches, half complete, were abandoned. Whole villages died or became deserted. Labour—men and women fit and willing to work—became the most precious thing that money could buy.

The poor villein, who grew corn in the summer to eat through the winter, at last saw his chance to escape from the duty of farming his lord's land besides his own. There was now more land on his lord's estate than there were people to farm it. Therefore he could now demand payment for farming the demesne land. Why should he be his lord's servant any longer? He would demand to pay a cash rent for his own land and free himself from feudal service. Then he would exchange strips with his neighbour so that all his strips would lie together in the open field. Perhaps, if he sold his pig, he could hire a labourer to work for him. Then he would be a yeoman.

The land-lord thought: My peasants are refusing to give labour service. Some of them are running away. Those to whom I give wages are demanding higher wages. I cannot afford to farm all my demesne any longer. I must rent some of it to the best yeomen in the village. Those who are most eager to farm well will be able to pay me a good rent.

But after the Black Death many land-lords found that the rents they received were not enough even to pay the wages of workers hired to farm the remaining part of the demesne. Wages were rising all the time. Some land-lords stopped being interested in their estates and



became merchants or government officers or professional knights instead. Others went to Parliament to demand that something should be done to control the situation.

The power of Parliament was growing. The burgesses also wanted action to check the demands of workers in their businesses. It was the gentry—the new middle class—who were bearing the main weight of taxes for the French war. In return they now asked for protection against rising wages.

The British Parliament today is divided into the House of Lords and the House of Commons (which proposes most of its laws). Edward III regularly summoned his lords, or peers, to council. Now, when he summoned the gentry too, he asked for their advice also. They were his ‘common people’ or Commons. They met in a different room from the Lords. Today’s division of Parliament was just beginning.

The Lords, the old baronial council, still acted sometimes as a court of law: for example, in the trial of any one of its members. In the days of trial by battle, a man could refuse to fight with a person of lower rank. So also, with trial by jury, a man had the right to be judged by his ‘peers’—persons of at least equal rank as himself. Thus a baron could be judged only by other barons, and a government minister impeached only in the House of Lords. This upper house, therefore, at various times, has had several duties: to advise, to approve laws, and to judge. It is still the highest court in England, and it is led by the Lord Chancellor.

The Commons made their suggestions for new laws through their leader, a ‘speaker’. It was he who led members to meet the Lords or the king. As the years passed, it became important for the king to choose the person who was going to be Speaker. Three centuries passed before the Commons regained the right to elect their own Speaker, as they do today.

Edward III supported the Commons whenever he wanted to control the Lords, who were his barons. In later reigns the Lords would often support the king against the Commons. Sometimes, both Lords and Commons would turn against the king.

The division between Lords and Commons was never so firm that it could not be crossed. Many barons in the Lords had sons in the Commons. When a baron died, his eldest son got both his estate and



his seat in the Lords. A second son might be a merchant, representing his town in the Commons. A third son might be a priest, or a lawyer, or a squire to a noble lord.

A yeoman with a good brain for business might get more land or more stock, build a better house, make himself useful in the district, and at last become a franklin or one of the lesser gentry. One of the more important gentry, by luck or hard work, might become at last a great lord, a 'peer'. Or, even if he could not rise himself, perhaps his son would. Since the later middle ages it has been increasingly possible for an Englishman to move from one class to another. That is an important part of democracy.

When hope is increased, however, so also is a person's dissatisfaction with his present position in society. Edward III, advised by his Commons, had tried to meet the effects of the Black Death with a new law, the Statute of Labourers. This statute, and others which followed it, tried to fix wages so as to save the land-lords from ruin. It was disobeyed, and wages still rose.

There was now a serious lack of tenants. Many peasants had gone from the open fields and cleared new land near forests, marshes and moors. They put up fences and grew hedges round the new fields which they made, and farmed whatever crops they wished, independent from neighbours and lords.

Land on the old estates lay neglected. Bailiffs, stewards and reeves tightened their hold over their lords' remaining tenants wherever they could, claiming more rent and more work and summoning those who refused to come before the manor courts.

This made even more villagers leave their homes and wander on the roads. They joined the beggars from the cities and the old soldiers from the war. They joined in the robbing and cheating of honest travellers. They stole from farms and made trouble at the manors which they passed.

The courts were kept busy. Thousands of labourers were accused of disobeying the new statutes. Money was scarce, traders cheated, the mass of people was angry, and violence increased. The police system of 'tithings'—the groups of men organized to keep the peace by frank-pledge—was breaking down. Few of the sheriffs could be relied on to keep proper control, to do justice fairly or to collect taxes honestly. The travelling judges checked the work of the sheriffs as much as



possible; but the assize courts were concerned mainly with statute law. Administration of the common law was equally important, and it depended on a deep knowledge of local conditions and customs.

The government needed local agents to control its administration in the towns and hundreds. It needed men with an interest in public affairs who could help with the business of local government. It found them among the local gentry. The best of the gentry were made justices of the peace—'J.P.s'—and were given various duties. These included work as magistrates, the re-organization of tithings, the catching of criminals, and even the control of prices and wages in a district. The J.P. generally did his work without payment.

As 'justices', J.P.s had the responsibility of helping the assize judges to administer the law. They held their own courts, called 'petty sessions', at parish level. They sent important cases to 'quarter sessions', courts which were held 4 times a year. A few cases might go on to the Court of Common Pleas at Westminster and then to the highest common court of all, the King's Bench. The Court of the Exchequer dealt with cases affecting the government's income. The Chancery Court dealt with cases which could not be decided by the ordinary rules of common law.

This strengthening of law and order after the Black Death came only just in time. Labourers were rebelling against the new statutes in increasing numbers. Crowds were even gathering to rescue labourers arrested under the statutes.

The king was old, and the French war had started again. The Black Prince, only 42 but tired and ill, came home to die. The French regained everything they had lost, and more. Only a narrow strip of Gascony and the port of Calais remained to the English crown.

Edward's wife had died from the Black Death. Her jewels were now worn by a lady named Alice Perrers, a favourite of the sorrowing king. Few people approved.

Edward had built improvements on to the Norman castle at Windsor as a comfort for his old age. He needed comfort, because in the last year of his life he was deserted by everybody. Even Alice Perrers left, taking with her the rings from his own fingers. He had reigned for 50 years. Now the crown passed to the Black Prince's son, a boy not yet 10 years old, named Richard.



*Richard II and the Peasants' Revolt*

Very few people in medieval England could read or write. There were few schools even for the children of gentry, and only about 1 in 5,000 of the population could go to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Education was mainly the property of church-men.

There was a church-man of some sort for every 50 persons in the population, so religion was a big influence in people's lives. People looked to the parsons, friars and monks for advice of all kinds. If now, in this confused time, the church had come forward with good advice, much of the trouble might have been avoided.

But the church itself was confused and unpopular. Many thinking people said it had lost its purity. The abbeys and monasteries had grown rich from the sale of wool to the burgesses and foreign merchants. Huge flocks of sheep now covered the monastic estates. Vast churches and cathedrals, towering high over little towns, were richly ornamented with precious works of art. In the villages, the parson's glebe was often second in size only to the lord's demesne itself. The income from the glebe not only provided things for the village church but filled the parson's pocket too. Many friars became fat with rich living, gained by tricking poor peasants with cheating lies and threats. Priests and friars sometimes quarrelled with each other, in their need to control men's minds, like dogs over a bone.

The main critic of the church was John Wyclif, a teacher at Oxford University. Wyclif attacked the pope and the bishops, pointing at their fine palaces, their liking for ceremony and the extent of their power. He said that Christ's life and preaching were more important than the church to men's souls. The power of the prelates was too great. True Christianity was, Wyclif said, a gathering of believers who had no need of bishops, abbots, priors or any of the pope's officials.

Then this brave man attacked other Catholic beliefs, particularly the one which says that the bread and wine served at Mass changes into the body and blood of Christ. The church had taught this belief for centuries, and refusal to accept it was called a heresy.

Wyclif spread his message by writing some of his books in English instead of Latin, the language of the church. His followers were called Lollards, because of the low and quiet way in which they said their prayers. Some of the Lollards went into the countryside to preach



Wyclif's message to the common people. Wyclif told others to translate the Bible into English, so that Christ's words could be heard by people who knew no Latin. Many people became Lollards, and therefore heretics.

The punishment for heresy became death. Under a new law, heretics could be taken to a public place for burning. There they were tied to a post and given an opportunity to declare their belief false. If they refused to do this, a fire of sticks was lit around them and they burned.

The Lollards increased in numbers and joined the other discontented people in the countryside.

Meanwhile, in the first parliament of Richard's reign, the Commons agreed to a poll tax—'poll' being Middle English for 'head'. This was the first time that a government tax had fallen equally on the mass of the population, instead of falling more heavily on the richer part of it. The tax was fourpence for each person, and within 3 years it was increased to a shilling.

A shilling for each member of a peasant's family amounted to a large sum for the poor man in his smoky cottage who starved through the winter until his grass grew fresh again in the spring. He looked at his thin cow, his few tools, and the small bag of grain remaining from last year's harvest. He examined his fruit tree and his vegetable garden and his carefully gathered stock of seed. He listened to the tales of waste in high places—the stories about rich lords' palaces with windows of coloured glass and ornamental gardens laid out with fish-ponds, bird-houses and flowering trees; the stories about courtiers in fur-lined robes, silk leggings and jewelled collars and belts; and the stories about abbots and priors with their barrels of fine imported wine which they bought with parish tithes.<sup>1</sup>

At the fairs, on market days, people began to climb up on boxes and make speeches to excite the crowd. One of these was John Ball, a man who had once been a priest. 'Things will never go well in England,' Ball cried, 'until the wealth of the rich is shared among the poor! Why should they think they are any better than we are?'

'Come, stand together!' the people shouted. The men of Essex, east

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* describes how both rich and poor lived at this time. So does William Langland, a poor wandering priest who died a few years later. His book is called *Piers the Ploughman*.



of London, armed themselves with sticks, spears and bows. They started hunting out the tax-collectors and killed those whom they found, while burning their papers. Then they attacked several manors and made fires of all the papers which recorded the duties of the villeins there. There was also trouble in the towns, as labourers rose against their masters. The rich Flemish wool merchants particularly were attacked.

The men of Kent, to the south-east of London, joined together in a rebel army. They chose as their leader a bold man named Wat Tyler, who was assisted by another named Jack Straw. John Ball was in prison at Maidstone in Kent. They broke open the prison and got him out and marched with him at the head of their rough army towards London.

The king, Richard II, was at this time 14 years old. Next to this child king, the most powerful person was his uncle, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who held estates in many parts of the country and who could gather an army whenever he wished. But John of Gaunt was away in the north. Another uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, was away in Wales. London was undefended.

The drawbridge of London Bridge was lowered by workers in the city, and the rebels rushed across it. They opened the prisons, robbed the shops, set fire to John of Gaunt's palace and attacked houses in the district known as the Temple, where the lawyers lived. Meanwhile they had been joined by the Essex men, who had been let in through a gate from the east.

Richard sheltered that night in the Tower of London. Next morning he went out bravely to meet the rebels at a place outside the city walls. They listened as he promised that feudal duties would go and that all would become free men. But while he was there, out of London, other rebels attacked the Tower and killed both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the royal Treasurer. All that afternoon there were more killings in London's streets, as the crowds ran wild.

The next day Richard offered to talk with the rebels again. Followed by only a small number of soldiers and the chief aldermen of London, the boy king rode to the market of Smithfield just outside the north wall of the city. There were the rebels crowding together behind their leader, Wat Tyler. Richard promised again that the peasants should have all that could be given fairly; but before the meeting



finished a knight near the king shouted out that Tyler was a thief. The angry Tyler rode forward, pulling a knife from his belt. Seeing this, the mayor of London, who was beside the king, pulled out a sword and struck Tyler in the neck and head.

The rebels roared in anger and raised their bows when Wat Tyler fell from his horse. Richard at once rode forward into the space between the huge crowd and his own small group of followers. 'Sirs!' he cried, 'will you kill your king? I am your leader. Let him who loves me follow me.' Then he turned his horse towards the open countryside. Confused and uncertain, the crowd moved away and scattered in small groups from the city walls. It seemed too good to be true, but the rebellion was at an end.

The damage had been great. All through the country manorial records had been destroyed, crops had been burned, paintings and glass in abbeys and churches spoiled, fine furniture broken, and charters and other records torn to pieces. Land-lords and their families lay hidden in the woods until the danger passed. Many land-lords, sheriffs, tax-gatherers, lawyers and merchants had been beaten with sticks and stones. In London alone, about 150 Flemish merchants had been killed.

The government now acted firmly. Rebel leaders from various parts of the country were brought to the law-courts for trial by jury. They were declared guilty, and killed. Both John Ball and Jack Straw were captured and killed. The government said that the king's promises to the peasants had been obtained by force: therefore they had no value.

The king agreed. 'Villeins you are still, and villeins you shall remain,' he told them.

The rebels had achieved almost nothing, although in the following years the feudal system continued to break down. Even John of Gaunt, the biggest land-lord in the country, thought it better to rent demesne lands to yeomen farmers rather than watch them go to waste because of the labour shortage. And as the number of successful farmers grew, they themselves became the gentry.

### *The rise of the House of Lancaster*

John of Gaunt, as a son of Edward III, was a Plantagenet. He was a brother of the Black Prince, and as a young man had gained the title Duke of Lancaster. Gaunt was almost middle-aged while Richard was



still a child. He was leader of the Council and very much 'a power behind the throne'.

Another powerful noble at this time was Gaunt's youngest brother, Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. Thomas was leader of the baronial party. He had the support of several important barons, including the rich Earl of Arundel and the clever Earl of Warwick. Another brother, Edmund, Duke of York, was friendly to the young king.

John of Gaunt went abroad when Richard II became a man, but Thomas stayed to lead the opposition to the new king's rule. Richard had strong ideas as a ruler. He was against the French war. He was against Parliament. He was against his uncles, because he wanted to govern directly and without interference. Around himself he formed a court party, the leaders of which were Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford. Michael de la Pole was made chancellor, chief minister of the government. Robert de Vere, the king's favourite, was given the new title of marquess and became the king's best friend.

The court was the centre of fashion. Men wore tight clothes with padding which advertised the shape of the body. The silk and wool of their long-skirted outer coats were in the same bright colours as the long dresses of the ladies. Certain families favoured certain colours: red and white for the king, blue and white for the House of Lancaster. The court shone with colour. Bright jewels flashed at dancing and at games. Music and spoken poetry, 'illuminated' books and beautiful paintings, all were popular at Richard's court.

The royal court was a good place for play, but it was not a good place from which to govern the country well. Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, with his friends Arundel and Warwick, formed a party called 'the Lords Appellant'. Their aim was much the same as that of the Lords Ordainers in Edward II's reign: to get rid of the king's favourites and return to government by council.

Parliament also was afraid of the king's desire to rule directly, and it supported the Lords Appellant. Together they managed to get Michael de la Pole dismissed from being chancellor. Then they ordered an inquiry into the civil service and removed a number of officials.<sup>1</sup>

The Lords Appellant were joined by John of Gaunt's son, Henry

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, then aged about 47, was one official who lost his position.



Bolingbroke. Henry was a just and generous man, who wanted only to see just, fair and efficient rule. When Richard resisted the Lords Appellant and was captured by them in London, it was Henry who said that his life should be saved.

Robert de Vere, the Gaveston of that time, had retreated northwards with the king's army. When he started towards London to rescue the king, he was defeated by Henry and the Appellants. The ministers in Richard's government were brought for trial and hanged at Tyburn. Only Richard himself was spared.

Richard alone, his friends taken from him, planned revenge. He was still king. For 8 years he did nothing for which his enemies could harm him, although all the time he was moving secretly towards more personal rule. John of Gaunt came back from abroad, and Richard tried hard to gain his friendship.

Then, quite suddenly, when his enemies were least expecting it, Richard struck at them. He arrested Thomas, Arundel and Warwick. Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, was taken to Calais and there murdered. Arundel's head was cut off. Warwick was sent out of the country.

And that was not all. A quarrel between Henry Bolingbroke and the Duke of Norfolk gave Richard the chance of sending both of them overseas. The truth was that Richard was afraid of the House of Lancaster. When John of Gaunt died, an old man at the age of 60, Richard took all the lands of his estate and commanded that Henry should never be allowed to return from abroad to claim them.

That was madness, because Henry had become the chief of all the nobility after Gaunt's death. If such an important man could have all his lands taken from him, who else was safe? Fear and discontent spread quickly among the remaining lords.

Then Richard, in another act of political madness, decided to go to Ireland with the purpose of showing his strength there. He left his kind but foolish uncle Edmund, Duke of York, to guard his position in England.

Henry of Lancaster lost no time. He landed at Ravenspur on the Yorkshire coast within two months of the king's departure. Quickly he was joined by northern lords led by Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. More lords came to him as he marched south, until even the Duke of York, realizing that resistance was impossible, joined him too.



When Richard II arrived back from Ireland three weeks later, it was too late. The rebellion was complete. Henry said that Richard could remain king, but afterwards changed his mind. There was no room for two kings, so Richard became known as 'Sir Richard of Bordeaux, a simple knight'. Henry took the crown and put Richard into prison. There Richard died, in a way at which people could only guess.

The new king's character was the complete opposite of Richard's. Richard had been imaginative and excitable, with the eagerness of a child, during all his short life. Henry Bolingbroke, although the same age, seemed dull and solid and older. He was seldom well, having a skin disease and a weak heart. All his reign was troubled because of the false and violent manner in which he had seized the crown.

Henry claimed the crown as a grandson of Edward III and by right of conquest. He was Henry IV, the first of a line of three kings of the House of Lancaster. They were the son (Henry IV), the grandson (Henry V) and the great-grandson (Henry VI) of John of Gaunt.<sup>1</sup>

John of Gaunt, however, was the third son of Edward III. When Richard II died without child, the crown should have passed to the family of Gaunt's elder brother. But Lionel's child was a girl who had married one of the Mortimer family, earls of March. She and her eldest son having died, the true heir to the throne was her grandson, Edmund Mortimer.<sup>2</sup>

Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, was a young boy at the time when Henry Bolingbroke became Henry IV. His cause was supported by his uncle, Sir Edmund Mortimer.<sup>3</sup> This Mortimer was brother by marriage to the son of the Earl of Northumberland who had helped Bolingbroke reach the throne. Northumberland's son, named Henry Percy like his father, was known as 'Hotspur'.

The new king faced two rebellions. First the Percys, not satisfied with their reward for helping him, sided with the Scots against him. Second, Sir Edmund Mortimer, sent to fight the Welsh, sided with their leader, Owen Glendower.

Glendower claimed to be of the family of the famous Llewellyn

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 78.

<sup>2</sup> See the plan on page 78.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare, in his play *Henry IV, Part 1*, makes the two Edmund Mortimers into one. It was the child who was Earl of March and heir to the throne. It was the uncle who married the daughter of Glendower.



and called himself Prince of Wales. He had supported Richard II against Henry and now tried to renew the Welsh war of independence against him.

Northumberland and his fiery son Hotspur decided to join with Mortimer and Glendower, and marched with an army to meet them.

Henry IV took the royal army to try to stop the two rebel armies meeting. He had with him his son, Prince Henry, a youth who later proved himself one of the greatest of England's soldier kings. Prince Henry—who is sometimes called Hal and sometimes Harry—was born at Monmouth and was the English 'Prince of Wales'. Hal, or Harry, had fought against Glendower in Wales and now led the charge against Hotspur's army when the royal army stopped it at Shrewsbury near the Welsh border.

Hotspur was killed.<sup>1</sup> His father, Northumberland, was put in prison for six months but was later released. Two years later he rebelled again.

This time he joined with Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, and Thomas Mowbray, son of the Duke of Norfolk whom Richard II had sent out of the country. Scrope and Mowbray were soon captured and killed, but old Northumberland lived on for several years, always trying to get revenge for his son's death.<sup>2</sup>

As Henry IV's health grew worse, Prince Hal tried to manage the work of government. His father, grey with sickness and worry, was slowly dying. He had worn the crown through many troubles in a short reign of 14 years. But when it passed to his son the future of their House of Lancaster seemed safe and bright.

### *Adventures in France*

The new king, 25 years old, good-looking and active, hard and experienced in war, came to the throne at a time when people were tired of barons and their quarrels and looked abroad for victory and fame.

Henry V's answer was to make a fresh English claim to the crown of France. He planned a conquest. He would defeat France and then increase English possessions there by marrying the French king's daughter.

First, however, he must attend to two problems at home.

<sup>1</sup> Although probably not personally by Prince Henry as in Shakespeare's play.

<sup>2</sup> These events are the source of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2*.



One was the spread of the Lollards, who were now led by a knight named Sir John Oldcastle. Henry was determined that the Lollards should be reduced, and he personally arranged for the burning of many of them.

Oldcastle was captured but escaped from the Tower. He planned a rebellion, but then was surrounded one night in a field not far outside London. Nearly 40 of his followers were taken and hanged by the neck. Oldcastle escaped again, however, and four years passed before he was captured again and burned as a heretic.

Meanwhile a second rebellion was planned, this one by supporters of the Earl of March. Edmund himself took no part in it, however, and in fact reported the rebels to the king. They were led by Edmund's brother by marriage, Richard of Cambridge. This Richard was a son of that Duke of York who had deserted Henry's father, Bolingbroke.<sup>1</sup> He was arrested and quickly killed. From then on the family of York became the bitter enemies of, and chief rivals to, the House of Lancaster.

Henry V's part in the Hundred Years' War was all success. He began by attacking the port of Harfleur at the mouth of the river Seine and by taking it after five weeks. Then he marched towards Calais but was forced south before he could cross the river Somme. There he learned that the French army, which was many times larger than his, had moved between him and the sea.

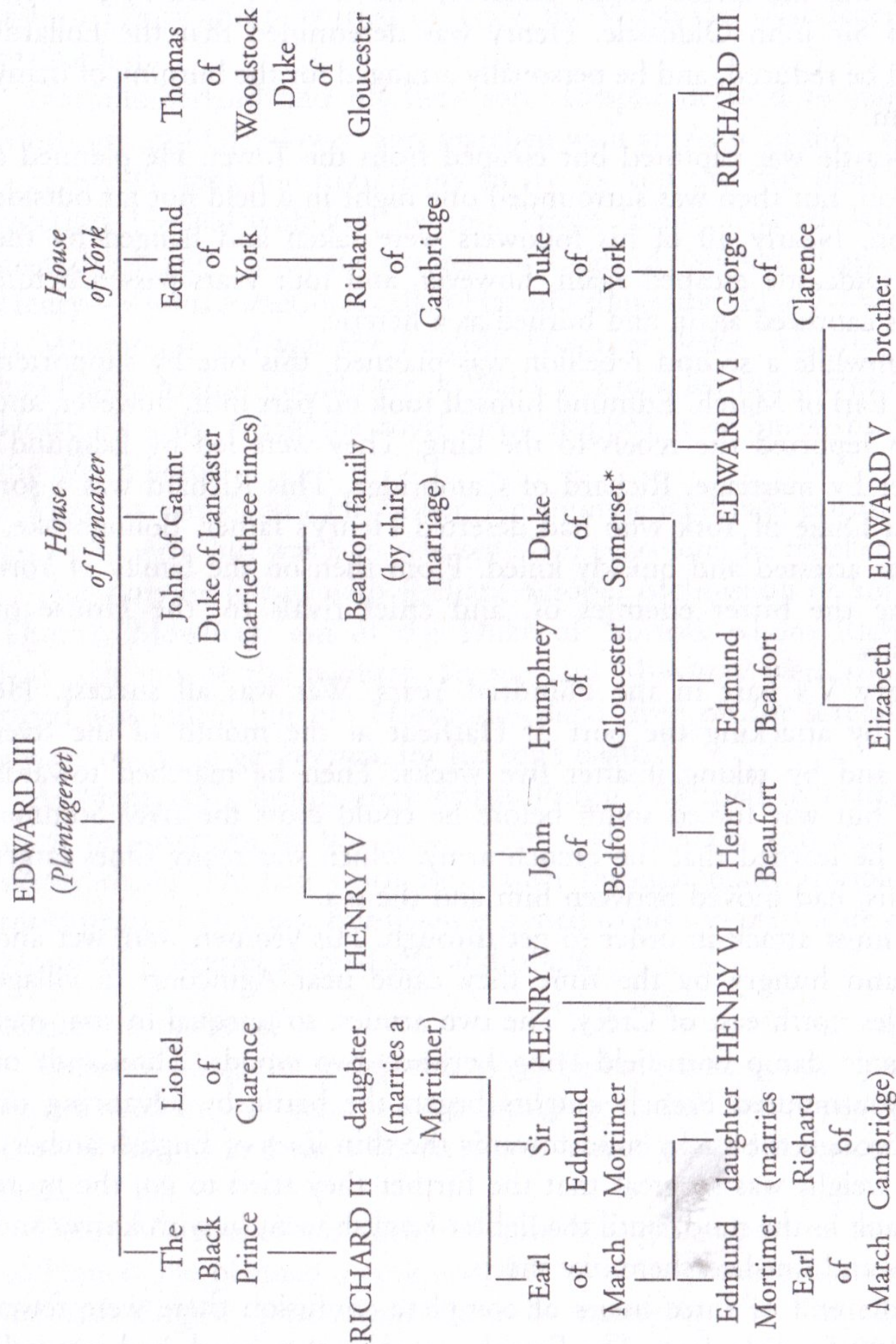
He must attack in order to get through. His yeomen were wet and tired and hungry by the time they came near Agincourt, a village 20 miles north-east of Crécy. The two armies, so unequal in size, met in a large damp corn-field lying between two woods. Thousands of heavily armoured French knights began the battle by advancing on foot through the sticky mud towards the thin lines of English archers. Their weight was so great that the further they tried to go, the more they sank in the mud, until the lighter English went in with knives and swords and finished them like sheep.

At the end of three hours of complete confusion there were fewer than 300 English dead. The French, on the other hand, had lost half their greatest nobles and more than 5,000 knights and spear-men. As at Crécy, the longbow-men had stopped all the might of the greatest force on earth.

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 78.



## THE PLANTAGENET LINE: LANCASTER AND YORK





Henry became a legend in his own life-time. In Europe he was feared as a cruel man. At Agincourt, suspecting an attack from behind, he had ordered the killing of the mass of his prisoners. It was an act which was against every idea of chivalry in war.

All of northern France was conquered in the next 5 years. Henry married his French princess and was declared heir to the French throne. A united England and France seemed possible when, from the marriage of Henry and Catherine, a son was born.

But the strength of England was stretched too far. Every department of government was deeply in debt. The war was becoming more bitter, and no prisoners meant no ransoms. The age of chivalry was ending. War was a trial of strength between nations, fought not for an ideal but for profit. And as the profit became less, so the struggle became less popular.

Henry V had been a great leader. He had bound men together in a way which overcame differences of class and party. He was the first king to use the English language in his letters and written orders. He cared for his men, making sure that none of them lacked proper weapons and warm clothing. He was severe in controlling his court, the government, and the war.

Henry died at the early age of 35. He was worn to death by the disease called dysentery and by the hardships of life in camp.

His son Henry VI was still only a baby, so the war was continued by the late king's brother, the Duke of Bedford.

Bedford was a good soldier but he was faced by one of the most extraordinary leaders the world has ever known. This was Joan of Arc, who in two years saved France from the English and left her country more united and stronger than ever before.

The French people thought that Joan had been sent by God to help them out of their troubles, and the English were forced to agree. She wore man's clothes and sat on a horse like a man. She dreamed that Christian saints advised her about the best thing to do. Many English soldiers thought she had magical powers, and they were afraid.

Joan and her soldiers drove the English from the French city of Orleans. Then they swept through other towns. The English retired slowly, giving up even the ancient city of Rheims. There a new French king was crowned. Joan tried to regain Paris for him and then went off to fight against England's friends, the Burgundians.



This astonishing woman was captured by the Burgundians and sold by them to the English. Bedford was determined that she be put to death, because even as a prisoner she remained a political danger to the English in France. The church-men were angry and anxious to get rid of her because she claimed to hear the voices of the saints.

Joan was tried for heresy. She was condemned and burned in the market-place at Rouen. An English soldier at the scene cried out: 'God forgive us! We have burned a saint.'

After that crime, events went very badly for the English, with the common people growing tired of war. Bedford died, and every bit of land in France was lost except a tiny area surrounding Calais.

The soldiers crowded back into England. Their defeats had not robbed them of the belief that one Englishman could beat three foreigners. And, as is usual after wars, they were restless.

They were far from pleased at what they saw of the state of their country. Henry VI had grown up into a quiet young man who looked more like a monk than like a king. His simple character was quite unsuited to the work of controlling his court or his barons. He himself was controlled by his wife, the strong-minded Margaret of Anjou.<sup>1</sup> His own mind was weak. Between his barons on the one side and Margaret on the other, he went slowly mad.

England had been ruled for many years by Bedford's brother, the Duke of Gloucester. This Gloucester was a violent man with no wisdom,<sup>2</sup> quite unable to keep peace in the Council while Henry VI was a child.

Slowly Gloucester had lost power to the cleverer men of the opposition; and the king now looked to them for advice and support. Together they turned against Gloucester and arrested him. He died in prison, possibly murdered, like the Gloucester in Richard II's reign.

The leader of the government now was the Duke of Suffolk, a favourite of the king. Suffolk was condemned by Parliament for the failures in France and told to leave the country. As his ship was crossing the Channel it was stopped by another ship. Suffolk was murdered, and his body was washed up on Dover sands.

It was an age of violence. The sheriffs and judges were threatened

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare in *Henry VI* calls her 'the she-wolf of Anjou'.

<sup>2</sup> Although he was called 'the Good Duke Humphrey'. He was the 'patron'—or protector and master—of the poet John Lydgate.



by the barons until law and order almost disappeared. In Kent there was another rebellion, led this time by a man named Jack Cade, also known as 'John Amend-all'. His demand was that Henry and his government be changed.

Cade's crowd of peasants entered London. Houses and shops were damaged and some members of the court were murdered. As before, promises were made for better government; but Cade was hunted to his death.

These were the conditions which the returning soldiers found. The barons, no longer able to obtain wealth from France, were using all means of getting rich in England. No one was safe. Armed groups of men were scattered throughout countryside and town, attacking manors, driving off cows and sheep, beating and robbing merchants, and raiding their shops and stores.

The soldiers quickly found places in the private armies of these barons, and the trouble increased. Gradually it developed into a struggle for power between the followers of the two royal families, the House of Lancaster and the House of York, both of them branches of the old Plantagenet line. Both claimed the right to rule. But while Henry IV had seized the crown for the House of Lancaster by force, the claim of the House of York was lawful—through marriage with the Mortimer family.

Poor, weak, mad Henry VI had no child and was increasingly unable to perform his royal duties. Who should the next king be? On the Lancastrian side (Henry's side) there was the Duke of Somerset, who was of the family of John of Gaunt, and his two sons Henry and Edmund Beaufort. On the Yorkist side there was the Duke of York who, as the son of Richard of Cambridge, was the proper heir to the throne.<sup>1</sup>

The various noble families related to these two Houses formed ranks behind them. Towns loyal to Yorkist families closed their gates to all Lancastrians. The court shut out all Yorkists. London was filled by armed followers of both parties, and each in turn packed Parliament with its supporters.

The middle-class gentry, many of whom cared nothing for either side, fortified their houses and stored up weapons and food. The peasants also, who wanted only to be left in peace, bent their heads

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 78.



and waited for the storm. The clouds had gathered, and each cloud had the face of a Yorkist or Lancastrian baron.

### *The Wars of the Roses*

Two events weakened the position of the Duke of York and drove him to civil war. Queen Margaret gave birth to a son, Edward, and the king for a short while recovered from his madness.

York's chief supporters were the Neville family, who were powerful in the north and into which he had married. The head of this family was the Earl of Salisbury. With him was his son, the young Earl of Warwick. Together York and the Nevilles now marched south towards London.

At St Albans city the Yorkists came upon the royal army and attacked it in the main street, killing the Duke of Somerset and taking prisoner his son Henry Beaufort, together with the king. One baron fell with his brain scattered over the stones, another fell with a broken arm, a third with a cut throat, and a fourth with a speared chest, until the whole street was full of bodies.

The king went mad again. For a few months after this battle of St Albans power was shared between the Duke of York and Queen Margaret, because the Duke did not dare to seize it for himself. Much of the north was solidly for the Lancastrians, while in the south the people were divided. There was no respect for either the government or the law.

Under cover of the main struggle there were smaller quarrels in the countryside. Greedy land-owners, under the protection of powerful lords, were seizing land from weaker neighbours. Tenants were tricked; magistrates were bribed. Wards were robbed and cheated by their guardians. The courts were crowded with complaints. Arguments about claims and rival claims to land dragged on for years.

The yeomen, less affected than richer men by the political struggle, continued to break down the feudal system of open fields. They enclosed more and more corn-land with hedges and fences and kept the fields for sheep and cows. Prices for meat were high. And, although the Flanders trade in raw wool had been affected by the French wars, there was a good demand for woollen cloth.

Indeed, the manufacture of cloth was now the country's main industry. Sheep meant wealth, although the animals were small and



weak. In the wool-producing counties, mills were built on the banks of fast-flowing streams. A series of wooden hammers on the water-wheel beat the cloth to give the wool in it a smoother finish.

A lot of waste-land was enclosed, and many trees were cut down to make more fields. Wood for building became quite scarce, so in some parts of the country a new business started: the making of bricks.

Cloth-making and brick-making were both 'cottage' industries. Nevertheless, although based firmly in the villages, they were controlled and organized by city companies. Eton school was built with bricks at about this time, and so were some of the famous colleges at Cambridge.

The city companies were slowly taking the place of the old guilds. New industry and trade required increasing supplies of money, or capital, to manage it. A new kind of business-man appeared, the 'middle-man'. He arranged for goods to move from craftsman to customer. He also worked between different craftsmen when (as with the spinning, weaving and colouring of cloth) more than one kind of operation was needed in manufacture.

Many of these business-men joined with merchants from the larger guilds to form city companies. Members of a city company wore the particular clothes or 'livery' of that company. Each of the main 'livery companies', as they were called, had its own coat of arms.

Although plague continued to attack the towns occasionally, and although trade was affected by the baronial struggle, the middle class was able to do well. The break-down of the guild system of master and man made it easier for the poor but clever man to succeed in both trade and industry. A favourite story among the English is about Sir Richard Whittington, who was Lord Mayor of London three times during the Hundred Years' War. The legend says that when 'Dick' Whittington was a young man his only possession was a cat. He broke the bars of class and wealth and rose to high position in the great commercial city of London.

One way to the top was by marriage. As happens in some countries today, many parents in medieval England sold their children into marriage with wealthy families. They sold them not only for money but for land, or for a share in a business, or for the support of a powerful lord. The idea that love should be the basis of marriage was one of



those foolish ideas which poets have. Girls who failed to marry had a difficult time at home. Often they became nuns.

A man's position in society was shown by the number of followers, supporters and friends he could seat at the long table in his great hall. The wealth needed to give a big dinner was a sign of social success. An earl sometimes offered his guests as much cooked meat as each could carry on a long knife. Invitations to such feasts were sought eagerly, and not only for the food. A yeoman or squire could rise in society only by knowing the local baron, wearing his livery and giving him service. Many yeomen with land had cases at law. A man could turn to his baron if he wanted a jury packed with friends to make sure that the judge would decide in his favour.

Another way to rise in society was by education. Kings, nobles and churchmen had started schools and colleges in the past. Now the city companies, the merchants and the landed gentry all took an increasing interest in starting schools which would give boys of the town or county a chance to rise. Many country gentlemen 'boarded' their sons out with private masters. The English language was now used at court, in Parliament, in the law-courts and in trade. Nevertheless, a good knowledge of Latin was very much the mark of the educated man; and French was taught as a foreign language. Boys were beaten severely if they failed in the study of any of these subjects. The system was very English.

But the hard schooling of students had a purpose. Men and families stood or fell as a result of their own efforts, although in the Wars of the Roses political success or failure was largely a matter of luck. It was a problem of choosing the winning side at the right moment. Some families changed sides more than once during the struggle, which lasted 30 years.

Four years after the first battle of St Albans, a parliament packed with Lancastrians declared that all the Yorkist leaders were outlaws, and it threatened them with death.

The Duke of York had retired to Ireland. His son Edward, Earl of March, had retired with the Nevilles, the earls of Salisbury and Warwick, to Calais. Now they all came back, the livery of their soldiers bearing the mark of the white rose of York.

The crown was powerless. The royal treasury was not much richer than the vast estates of York and Warwick. In many districts the king's



voice was heard less often than that of the local baron. England was reduced almost to a group of states with barons working local courts and councils independently of royal authority. The Lancastrian nobles were just as bad as the Yorkists. When these two main families lined up against each other, the crown became like a football kicked around by two liveried teams.

It was a confused sort of civil war. Five battles within nine months changed the balance first one way, then another. At Northampton, Warwick and March again captured poor Henry; but Queen Margaret with her son Edward continued the fight. At Wakefield in Yorkshire, which was Lancastrian ground, Margaret destroyed a Yorkist army. The Duke was killed fighting, his son Edmund of Rutland was hunted and killed, and the old earl of Salisbury (Warwick's father) was taken prisoner and executed that night.

But then, at Mortimer's Cross near the Welsh border, a Lancastrian army was beaten by Edward of March, who was the new Duke of York. The army had been gathered by a Welsh gentleman named Owen Tudor, who had married Henry V's French widow, Catherine. Tudor was a firm Lancastrian, so the Yorkists took his head.

Then the position changed again. At the second battle of St Albans, Margaret defeated Warwick and recaptured the king. But she was not strong enough to enter London. Warwick, who had escaped from St Albans, joined with Edward of York. Together they entered London, while Margaret and Henry retired north. Edward, fourth in the Yorkist line from King Edward III, was crowned King Edward IV.<sup>1</sup>

The victory of the House of York was not yet complete, however. The throne could not be shared with Henry VI, and Henry and Margaret were still loose in the north. A fifth big battle must now be fought.

Edward IV and Warwick hastened up the old Roman road into Yorkshire. Near the village of Towton they were met by the whole Lancastrian army. It was winter. A blinding snow-storm blew into the faces of the men of the House of Lancaster and carried the arrows of the Yorkists, the white rose army, with it. The armies became locked in battle. For six hours, heavily armoured men fought hand to hand until blood marked the fallen snow. Slowly the mass of the Lancastrian army began to fall back. The Earl of Warwick, wounded and without his

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 78.



horse, urged his men forward. No prisoners were taken: there was only the bitterness of death.

Margaret and Henry and their son Edward escaped into Scotland. Many of the Lancastrian nobility lay dead upon the field. Others had run away. Some, like Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, agreed to serve the new king.

But Margaret, who was proud and brave, tried again 3 years later. And again she failed. Her castles in the north were torn to bits by King Edward's new cannon. Somerset came again to her side but was defeated and killed at a place called Hexham. Other friends and supporters of the red rose were also put to death. Her foolish husband, Henry, was taken by the Yorkists and led, tied and helpless, into the Tower of London.

Margaret and her son found safety in France. She was only 34, and she was not finished yet.

Help came in a surprising way. The Earl of Warwick, who had done much to get the crown for York, was the chief power behind the throne. He was more experienced than Edward, and generally controlled the government at the beginning of the young king's reign.

Edward did not like this, and began to give key positions to members of his wife's family, the Woodvilles, chief of whom was Lord Rivers. The Treasury was put into the care of Rivers, while at the same time Warwick's brother was dismissed from the Chancery.

Warwick was angry. He joined with Edward's brother George, Duke of Clarence, and prepared for war. Warwick's family, the House of Neville, was much more popular than the Woodvilles were, and it seemed for a few months as though Warwick would succeed. Rivers was killed, but Edward called together other Yorkist families and turned on the rebels suddenly.

Warwick and Clarence escaped to France, where Warwick offered his help to Margaret. He then invaded England and forced Edward to escape to Holland. The House of Neville then held all power for 7 months.

Warwick is known in English history as 'the king-maker'. First he had put Edward IV on the throne. Now he took Henry VI out of the Tower and put him back on the throne.

But Margaret and the followers of the red rose were mistaken if they thought that England was again Lancastrian. Edward IV, though



happy when at peace, was glorious at war. He landed with a small group of followers at Ravenspur, the same place on the Yorkshire coast where Henry Bolingbroke had landed over 70 years before. His brother Clarence deserted Warwick and came to join him. Edward was accompanied also by another brother, Richard 'Crookback', Duke of Gloucester.

Warwick the king-maker sent messages to Margaret to come from France to join him. Edward entered London and quickly threw old King Henry back into the Tower. Then, at the village of Barnet, a little north of London, Edward IV and the Yorkists faced Warwick and the Lancastrians. The Lancastrians were led by a new Duke of Somerset named Edmund, Henry Beaufort's brother.

It was an early morning in spring, and the battle-field was covered in thick mist. There was confusion and a lack of control in Warwick the king-maker's army. Part of it got lost and started shooting by mistake at another part. The Yorkists moved forward and captured the king-maker, who was quickly killed.

Somerset escaped and rode west, towards where Margaret had planned a landing. She had her son, Prince Edward, with her. Their aim was to increase their strength by joining with the Tudor family in Wales.

King Edward IV was too quick for them. He had followed Somerset and now caught all the Lancastrians together at a place called Tewkesbury. His victory was complete. Margaret was captured. Prince Edward was killed on the field. Somerset was captured and killed later.

King Henry VI was put to death in the Tower by King Edward's command.<sup>1</sup> Margaret at first was kept in England and then was sent to France. Eleven years later she died in her own land of Anjou.

Everything now seemed safe for the family of the white rose. But, having destroyed the Lancastrian Plantagenets, the Yorkist branch of the Plantagenet tree soon began to destroy itself too.

### *The end of the House of York*

As the struggle had deepened it had become more bitter. Noble prisoners had been killed rather than kept. Chivalry was dead, and with

<sup>1</sup> Although probably not by the hand of Richard of Gloucester, as told by Shakespeare in *Henry VI, Part 3*. Shakespeare of course personalizes events in all his historical plays to increase their dramatic effect.



its death many of the old baronial families of England had died too. The newer families—the Woodvilles, the Howards (later made Dukes of Norfolk) and the Stanleys (made Earls of Derby)—belonged to a new age. Edward might be their king, but he was not their liege-lord.

Nevertheless, the end of the middle ages was marked by another change in the manner of kingly rule. It became personal. Edward did not rule in the manner of the medieval kings, who depended on the Council or later on Parliament. The new barons did not have the powers of the old, so the personal power of the king became even stronger.

Edward IV was really the first of a new sort of king. He made his own policies. He was determined that the crown should be free of debts, so he abandoned war and entered trade.

The defeat of the English by the French at the end of the Hundred Years' War had cut the chains with which the Normans had bound England to France. Now the fate of the island depended on the use made of the open sea. Ship-building increased. The ports became more important than inland towns. Edward and his merchants began to look further and further away for markets for English goods.

The sale of woollen cloth was largely in the hands of the 'Merchant Adventurers', a company which had first received a charter in the reign of Henry IV. English cloth was soon travelling to markets as far away as Russia and the Middle East.

Wine from the Mediterranean, spice and dried fruit from the East, and salted fish from Iceland, all added flavour on the rich man's table. Silk covered his wife's body. Heavy cloths with pictures sewn in many colours, called tapestries, hung on his walls.

Ideas came slowly from abroad. In this century the great Renaissance—the re-birth of culture which marks the end of the European middle ages—was growing in Italy. But Italians were not popular in England. Italians, the English thought, were people fit only for robbing honest pilgrims on their way to Rome.

The church was not popular either. It was believed to own about a quarter of all the land in England. The abbey and the priory were thought to be stuffed with riches. The pope was a foreigner whose curse, some people said, would fail to kill a fly.

Nevertheless, the whole life of the islanders was set deeply in religion. In summer weather great numbers of pilgrims moved on



holiday through the shires. On certain holidays, or holy days, country people gathered on village greens, and citizens crowded into noisy and narrow streets, all watching religious plays acted on raised stages in the open air.

Some of these plays told Bible stories. They were called 'mystery' or 'miracle' plays. Town guilds produced such plays every year. They were full of colour: God often wore a crown and a white robe, black and red devils came up through the stage, and angels rose to heaven up real ladders.

Other plays told stories about good and evil, pride, greed, foolishness and other human qualities. They were called 'morality' plays.<sup>2</sup>

The English language used by the common people had many local forms or 'dialects'. When William Caxton the printer set up his press at Westminster, his business was to present his books in a form of English which could be understood by the largest number of people.<sup>3</sup> Caxton told the story of some London merchants whose ship was stopped by lack of wind. They landed on the Kent coast about 40 miles from London and knocked at the door of a house for food. When one of them asked for eggs, the housewife replied that she could not understand because she did not know French. But they were not speaking French! It was only when they used the local word 'eyren' that they got the eggs they wanted.

Caxton's work was difficult therefore. It was similar to that facing writers in some countries today, who have the problems of uniting several spoken languages into a single written one.

Possibly differences in language between one shire and another was one reason why England, although small, was such an awkward country for a single king to govern. Certainly Edward IV was unable to remain in London. He was always on horseback, like other kings before him, setting up councils in the north and west to do his work.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the plays performed at the towns of York, Chester, Wakefield and Coventry still exist in literature.

<sup>2</sup> The best known is *Everyman*. It is about a common man with many friends who is summoned by Death. The only friend willing to go with him is Good Deeds.

<sup>3</sup> Caxton printed nearly 100 books, including the work of Chaucer. Among them was a book about the chivalry of King Arthur by a Yorkist knight named Sir Thomas Malory. It is from this time in the history of English literature—that is, after Caxton—that Middle English becomes 'Modern' English.



He had his two brothers, George of Clarence and Richard of Gloucester, to help him. Clarence was shallow, however, and not to be trusted. He had deserted Edward once in the war and might do so again. Edward accused Clarence of plotting treason and shut him up in the Tower. There Clarence died, and nobody knows how. Legends say that he was drowned in a barrel of wine.

Richard of Gloucester now became the most important man in England after the king. Richard's body may have been bent, giving him the name 'Crookback' or 'Crouchback', but his mind was straight and clear. He governed the north of England for the king and fought against the Scots.

The king's last years were wasted in rich living. He ate too much, he drank too much, and he loved too many women. His pretty Woodville wife was cold and hard inside. Edward preferred the company of mistresses. His favourite among these was a fair and merry girl named Jane Shore, who was the wife of a London merchant.

When Edward died, aged only a little over 40 but worn out with good living, his favourite courtier Lord Hastings took Jane Shore. Hastings did not enjoy her long, however. Richard of Gloucester, arriving in London, accused them both of working against him. Hastings lost his head, and Jane Shore was put into prison.

Edward IV left two sons. The elder, Edward V, was aged 12. Both boys were in the hands of their mother's family, the Woodvilles, who also controlled the court.

Edward V was with his Woodville uncle, the new Lord Rivers, at Ludlow castle in the Welsh marches when his father died. Richard of Gloucester feared rule by the Woodvilles. While Lord Rivers was taking the young king towards London to be crowned, Richard caught them on the way, at a place called Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire.

Rivers was arrested and later killed. Edward was taken by Richard to London but was never crowned. He and his little brother were put in the Tower. There they disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

Richard of Gloucester took the crown as Richard III by what today is known as a coup—that is, he had used both surprise and force. The chief supporter of his coup had been a Lancastrian baron, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham had preferred rule by

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare in *Richard III* says that they were murdered by Richard's direct order. Many people then and afterwards believed it, but there is no proof.



Richard to rule by the Woodvilles because Richard had promised him rewards. But now the treatment of the two boy princes split the Yorkist party. It turned many people against Richard, and Buckingham turned with them.

Buckingham led a rebellion to put a new king, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, on the throne. The rebellion failed, however, and Richard took Buckingham's life.

The true heir to the throne was the princes' sister, Elizabeth, aged 18. It was whispered around the court that Richard, her uncle, was proposing marriage to her. Richard's own wife and son had died, so people were wondering who the next ruler would be.

Henry Tudor had no better claim to the crown than Richard had. Henry's father's father had been that Welsh gentleman, Owen Tudor, who had married Henry V's French widow. His mother was of the Lancastrian Beaufort family, in line from John of Gaunt.<sup>1</sup> In order to strengthen his claim, Henry also planned to marry the girl Elizabeth.

Two years after Richard had seized power, Henry of Richmond crossed from France into the Tudor lands in Wales. He gathered soldiers from Lancastrian friends, entered England and marched to meet the white rose of York. The last chapter in the Wars of the Roses was beginning.

King Richard III was waiting with the royal army on high ground near the market town of Bosworth in Leicestershire. On his left was the wing of his army commanded by John, first Duke of Norfolk of the Howard family,<sup>2</sup> who hold that title—first among the English peers—even today. On Richard's right were the soldiers of Henry Percy, fourth Earl of Northumberland, whose family also lasted a long time in English history—almost 300 years.

One noble, Lord Stanley, with his brother Sir William Stanley and several thousand men, stood separately, on the edge of the battle-field. Lord Stanley was the third husband of Richmond's mother and he supported the Tudor cause. But his son by a previous marriage was held prisoner by Richard, so he could not join directly with either side. He and his men stood waiting.

The cannons and the archers began firing from both the Yorkist and the Lancastrian sides. The two armies then locked their shields together as they struck with swords and spears. Richard, in the thickest part of

<sup>1</sup> See the footnote to plan on page 78.

<sup>2</sup> See the plan on page 135.



the fight, sent back a message asking the Earl of Northumberland to help him. But Northumberland would not come because he said he was watching to see what Stanley would do. The Duke of Norfolk fell dead; Stanley joined Richmond; and Richard knew he was alone. In despair he threw himself and a small company of men at Richmond's bodyguards. He struck down the Tudor flag-bearer and then stood fighting bravely until he was overcome.

His body, full of wounds, was thrown across a horse and carried from the field. His crown, found hanging on a thorn bush, was taken by Lord Stanley and placed on Richmond's head.

'The king is dead. Long live the king!' is a strange English saying. It means that as soon as a king is dead, another must take his place. Richmond was now Henry VII, first of the famous royal House of Tudor. This House of Tudor grew out of a joining of York with Lancaster, because Henry married Elizabeth, Edward IV's daughter.

People at that time said that God gives victory to the side which is right. Nobody could be sure, however, that the struggle between the roses was really over. Henry, like Edward and Richard before him, had come to power by force. His claim was not good. Although the nation was tired of war, it had become unsettled by it. Many landowners were still prepared to fight for their rights, rather than go to law. And they would fight against anyone, even against the king, for a suitable reward.

The people were afraid, and so was Henry, the new king. They watched anxiously as he began slowly on the work of turning their doubts and fears into loyalty to the Tudor throne.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 3

ENGLAND	EUROPE	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
		1301–25	
Edward II (1307–27)	Dante	Delhi sultanate	Mamluke sultanate
		1326–50	
Edward III (1327–77)	Black Death	Ottoman Turks	Empire of Mali
		1351–75	
English spoken in Parliament	Charles V of France	Ming dynasty	Ethiopian empire
		1376–1400	
Richard II (1377–99)	Bohemia	Tamburlaine	Bakongo kingdom
		1401–25	
Henry IV (1399–1413)	Eric of Pomerania	Vijayanagar	Navahas and
Henry V (1413–22)	Sigismund of Hungary	Ayuthia	Apaches in America
		1426–50	
Henry VI (1422–61)	Joan of Arc	Majapahit	Inca empire
		1451–75	
Edward IV (1461–83)	Charles the Bold	Bahmani empire	Aztec empire
Edward V (1483)	Ferdinand and Isabella	Mohammed II	Portuguese on Gold Coast
		1476–1500	
Richard III (1483–5)	Ivan the Great	Diaz in Indian Ocean	Songhai empire
Henry VII (1485–1509)	Development of the Renaissance	Vasco da Gama in India	Columbus crosses Atlantic



## *The Age of Adventure*

### *Henry VII, the first Tudor king*

During the century following the battle of Bosworth, England changed from a medieval state into a modern nation.

Partly this was the work of the Renaissance, because new ideas filled men's minds. Partly it was the work of two great Tudor rulers: Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. They shared the spirit of adventure which was in the air. They checked the winds of change from blowing into a storm. They guided the ship of state through dangerous seas to a calm port.

The ship was made ready by Henry VII, the first Tudor king. Probably he was the wisest man who ever sat on the English throne. Certainly he was one of the cleverest. He found the state weak, and left it strong.

Henry Tudor was a small man, pale-faced and sad. He claimed the throne by right of conquest—that is, it was his because he had won it. This was a dangerous claim to make, because others might do the same. The past had left its shadows. There were still Yorkists who would not rest until they had upset this false Lancastrian, this invader from Wales.

Several attempts to replace him were made. The crown was claimed for Edward, Earl of Warwick. This Edward was son of George of Clarence and nephew of the last Yorkist king. He had been 10 years old at the time of Bosworth. Since the battle he had been kept a prisoner in the Tower. Now people whispered that he had escaped.

The Yorkist party produced a boy named Lambert Simnel and pretended that he was Edward of Warwick. Henry marched against their army and defeated it. Then, to show his scorn of their claim, Henry took the pretender Lambert Simnel and put him to work as a dish-cleaner in the royal kitchen.

A more dangerous claim was made by Perkin Warbeck. This young man pretended to be the younger of the sons of Edward IV, the two princes whom Richard III had locked in the Tower. Warbeck's claim



was believed by many people to be true, because no one knew what had happened to the two princes.

Perkin Warbeck tried for 7 years to gain the throne. But at last he was captured and he confessed that his claim was false. He was hanged at Tyburn.

Henry VII was not a violent man, but there could be no place even for lawful opposition to a Tudor king. The innocent Edward of Warwick was taken from the Tower and executed by the axe. Other nobles were imprisoned or driven from the country. Even in the reign of Henry's son, Henry VIII, members of the Yorkist family and their supporters were still being hunted down, arrested, and killed.

It was necessary also to paint black the picture of the previous hundred years. The Tudor chroniclers, when writing their histories, worked willingly. 'Look,' they said to the people, 'the country was split by civil war before our government took power. Only strong rule can make us peaceful and rich, and that means Tudor rule.'<sup>1</sup>

Besides all this, Henry was more than a good politician. He was a good businessman too. He knew that he must increase the crown's wealth in order to increase its power. The old Yorkist estates quickly became crown lands. Henry squeezed all the income he could out of them. His system of collecting rents, fees and duties was as tight as he could make it. He generally collected them on quarter-days: Lady Day (25 March), Midsummer Day (24 June), Michaelmas (29 September) and Christmas Day (25 December) of each year.

The J.P.s in the boroughs and counties had never worked so hard before. Nevertheless, many justices worked willingly, some even without pay. It was the first step in public life. Henry's government rewarded good work. It was eager that local people, sitting on parish and county councils, should bear their share of responsibility in the administration of each district. But local government could not be left to do everything independently. Local administration required strong central control.

The central government at Westminster had never worked so efficiently and effectively before. The king surrounded himself with clever and forward-looking ministers. His friend and chancellor, John

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare was a Tudor chronicler. All his history plays were written in the reign of Elizabeth. He obtained his stories from earlier Tudor sources, and the facts in them are often twisted.



Morton, was among the first to realize that government depended on a full treasury. His tax-collectors presented rich people and poor with a difficult problem. It was a choice which became known as 'Morton's fork'. A show of wealth meant that a man was able to pay. But no show of wealth also meant that he could pay, because he must be saving his money by hiding it!

This was a bitter joke for Englishmen. The men of Cornwall in the west rose up in rebellion. Most people, however, accepted the new taxes without making trouble. They paid the cost of strong government because they wanted peace.

The English have always placed limits on the extent of central rule, nevertheless. They prefer, like most people, to be free to make as much money as they wish and to spend it how they wish. They argue for freedom to organize their lives without interference from the state. They do not trust central government. Even Parliament must operate without the authority of a written constitution.

Henry used Parliament as a tool of government. First he arranged for some of the members of his Privy Council to be elected to the House of Commons. Then those members persuaded others to make the laws which the king wanted.

Parliament did not meet regularly, as it does in England today. It was summoned only when the king wanted it. After it had done the king's work it was dissolved, ended.

Many of the laws made by Henry's parliaments were aimed at limiting the power of the nobility. Although few barons now sat in council, in some areas they still controlled and threatened the local courts. Both king and people feared them. The bad old days were still remembered. They must not come back again.

Laws were made to limit the number of followers wearing livery which a noble was allowed to keep. Nobles accused of breaking these and other laws were brought before a central court. The judges of this court were a committee of the Privy Council. They sat in a large room of Henry's river-side palace at Westminster. The blue ceiling had a pattern of golden stars, and the room was called the Star Chamber.

There was no jury in the Star Chamber court. The justice was the king's. Nobles who were guilty of mistakes had to pay for them; but they paid with money, not their lives. Henry preferred money.



The king's new-found wealth helped him to rule in safety and in peace. He could buy soldiers whenever he needed them. He had no use for a private army. Instead he kept a personal bodyguard. There were about 200 of them, and he dressed them in splendid red coats to give colour to ceremonial occasions. He called them his 'yeomen of the guard'.

Henry did not rule only from London. Like other kings before him, he was continually moving around with part of his council, while other members of it remained at Westminster. There were two parts of his country which required attention particularly. One was the Welsh marches, and the other was the north. Both were far enough away from the capital to remain wild and unlawful. Both had their own councils, which performed in these provinces much of the work performed for the south from Westminster.

The longer the peace was kept, the more it affected the appearance of town and countryside. City walls decayed, because it was no longer necessary to repair them. Houses appeared outside the city walls, free from the dirt and smells that lay inside. Country manor-houses were built without the need for fortifications. Warm red brick was used, and there were large windows made of small diamond-shaped pieces of glass.

The old baronial castle had become useless since the development of cannon. Now, in the Tudor peace, moss and weeds grew up the outer walls. Grey stone court-yards became gay with flowers and climbing plants and flowering trees. The Tudors and their people loved flowers. The royal mark was a large red rose.

In the towns too, the houses of rich persons were set in gardens surrounded by thin high walls built to keep them private. Merchants in long-skirted nobes could walk round their gardens undisturbed by the noisy crowds in the streets outside. Their wives could sit out sewing, in the long summer evenings, without care of the dirt, disease and violence which lay beyond the garden wall.

London was a dangerous city, with lepers, beggars and thieves crowding its rat-run streets. Wise men seldom went out after dark; and if they did, they never walked alone. Even in the light of day it was necessary to carry a sword or a good thick stick.

But London was also a colourful city. Gentlemen wore fur-lined robes in red, blue or grey. Their legs and feet were splendid in long



tight stockings and silk shoes. Their hair flowed down under soft round caps. Ladies wore their dresses long and full. Their heads were covered by ornamental hoods which reached down over the shoulders at the back and sides.

The materials used had become richer by the end of Henry's reign. Men and women wore clothes more fully cut to widen the shape of the body.<sup>1</sup> But people even of the middle class still lived without baths, without tap water, and without lavatories and pipes for waste.

The countryside lay green and bright all round the little towns. The island was still mainly agricultural and there was more forest than there is today. There was also more low-lying land, which was often flooded by swollen rivers and by the sea.

Travel was difficult. Going from extreme north to south, or east to west, meant a journey of several days. No one travelled for pleasure. Most people stayed in their own districts all their lives. They would be regarded as foreigners in other districts. Marriage was between neighbours; there was little mixing of blood between different parts of the island. The long-haired men of Viking blood in the north-east remained an inch or two taller than the brown-eyed Saxon of the south and the dark-haired western Celt.

There were still pilgrims, of course. Many monasteries opened shrines—holy places—and showed relics in order to attract such visitors. The church also supported inns in which travellers could rest, especially near abbeys and cathedrals. But many new inns were started by business-men during the sixteenth century; and they were built mostly near or in towns, where two or more roads joined, at river-crossings and on steep hills. Many of them had picture signs, hanging outside, for people who could not read.<sup>2</sup>

On either side of the rough roads, the fields were fertile. Slowly the country was recovering from the effects of war and plague. Attacks of plague were now limited to large towns, especially London. The small country towns had become free of plague—free to grow again as market centres. The population of the whole country had again reached about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions.

<sup>1</sup> Royal clothes of this time can be seen on English playing cards.

<sup>2</sup> These signs often showed a royal mark: for example, the Sun—the mark or arms of Richard I; the Red Lion—John of Gaunt; or the Rose and Crown—the House of Tudor.



## *The Renaissance*

Henry VII reigned 24 years. The new king, Henry VIII, was a second son. The first son, Arthur, had died when only 17.

The new Henry was a fine-spirited young man, extremely good-looking and active. His cheeks were well coloured, a sign of good health. His nose was high-boned and royal. The ladies of his court admired him, and the men envied him. He was very good at sport, which is a good quality in the opinion of most Englishmen. He liked music and dancing and poetry,<sup>1</sup> and he treasured the fine things of Italy, France and Spain, the countries of the Renaissance.

His manner was, at first, direct and friendly. He was known as 'Bluff King Hal'—'Hal' or 'Harry' being the popular form of the name 'Henry'. But as he grew older his manner became more secret, even to his closest advisers. His body was always large, and soon it began to thicken and seem huge and frightening to people near him. He had a terrible temper when disturbed. His ministers soon learned to treat him carefully and with respect.

Henry VIII was married six times during a reign of nearly 40 years. His first wife was a Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon, who was the widow of his brother Arthur. Henry loved Catherine well enough during the early years, but she was 5 years older than he. More than anything else, Henry wanted a son. The throne had come safe to him from his father. Henry felt that he could keep it safe only by showing his people a male heir. In 20 years of married life, Catherine provided him with only a daughter. She had other children but they all died young.

In the early years, all seemed bright. The king was rich, thanks to his father, and successful. He gained two victories against foreign countries. The first was against the French. It was called 'the Battle of the Spurs', because the French used their spurs against their horses' sides to ride away fast. The second was against Scotland. At the battle of Flodden, the Scottish king was killed.

Henry was a great ship-builder. He increased the English navy from 7 to over 50 warships. He increased the area of their sails for better speed. He put cannons between decks, large enough to sink ships besides killing men. The *Great Harry* weighed over 1,000 tons and had seven rows of guns along each side.

It seemed proper for the actions of a Renaissance ruler to be on a

<sup>1</sup> One of his teachers had been John Skelton, the poet.



grand scale. Henry's meeting with the French king, during a time of peace, was very grand. The place where they met was afterwards called the Field of the Cloth of Gold because of the richness of the ornaments there.

The Renaissance was, on the surface, a re-birth in the world of the arts. Its splendid ornaments reached England in increasing number. Palaces, cathedrals and monasteries all showed examples of its fine wealth.

The Renaissance was very much the glory of the Roman Catholic church. Bishops and abbots in England welcomed it. Thomas Wolsey, archbishop of York, was chief among those who used its treasures; he built a palace called Hampton Court. Wolsey presented Hampton Court to Henry and it remained a favourite royal mansion for centuries.

The big country houses furnished in Tudor times generally showed the foreign influences of the Renaissance. The heavy wood of seats, fire-places and cupboards was cut with rich patterns. The long dining-tables were on legs cut to look like bits off temples in Greece. Greek-shaped posts stood at the four corners of huge beds; and many such beds even had a roof, and curtains down the four sides. The invention of printing brought ornamental wall-papers to some Tudor rooms, while in others pictures were painted directly on to the walls.

Buildings, furniture, clothes, jewellery—all showed the effects of Renaissance art. But the Renaissance was more than a development in the work of artists and crafts-men. There was much below the surface, too, which pointed to a new way of life. This 'spirit' of the Renaissance flowed north across Europe and entered England as the 'New Learning'. Its adventurous ideas soon began to affect most levels of English society.

We have seen how, in the middle ages, society was guided by religion and the church. People went to the priests for knowledge and, they thought, for wisdom. There was a priest for every 100 persons in the population. The towns were like forests of square and pointed church towers. Their bells could be heard through much of the countryside, summoning the people to prayer.

But the priests taught less about God than about the saints. The saints, they said, were everywhere. The saints would reward those who supported the church. They would perform miracles for those who



paid to kiss their relics. They would punish those who failed to buy 'indulgences'—forgiveness for sins, or wrong actions.

Saints' days, like harvest festivals, were holidays in the farming year. People went to church, as on Sundays, and then had a public feast, with meat and perhaps too much to drink. Then, as always, the church was more than the centre of village life. It was in life and part of it.

The same was true with classes of people higher up the social scale. The church was no different from the state. Educated people could find many professions in it: manager, lawyer, accountant, doctor. They worked both within the church and in the life around it. Many used the church, as Thomas Wolsey did, as a ladder for climbing towards high positions in public life. Church-men became civil servants, diplomats, and privy councillors.

But the religion of many people was becoming more personal and less dependent on priests. This was due partly to the Lollards, partly to Wyclif's Bible in English, and partly to the friars; but mostly and above all it was due to the mixing of faith with reason. People began to realize that a full life could be lived outside the Catholic church.

It is odd that the man mainly responsible for causing people to become critics of the church was a Catholic priest. His name was Erasmus and he was a Dutchman who visited England several times and taught as a professor at Cambridge. It was Erasmus, with friends in high places, who had most influence in spreading the New Learning throughout England.

The New Learning invited people to ask questions and to explore rather than merely accept the things they were told as true. Erasmus desired that all men, not only priests, should be able to live a full cultural life. The teaching of Erasmus and his friends invited men and women to take part in the common spirit of adventure.

Both men and women of the middle class became affected by the Renaissance. More and more learned to read and write. Only the poorer classes remained untouched, because for them there was no education; while the middle-class squires and their sons did best of all. For the sons of squires, there was a great change in the subject-matter of education.

The feudal squire had been taught things which made him fit for service to his lord and king. He did not read books. However, the squire of the middle ages, born to chivalry, had gone many years before. The squire was now a country gentleman, self-made in a world



of business and profits where chivalry had no place. A good head was more important than a strong arm to a Tudor squire. This kind of squire, like the city merchant, lived only by commercial rules.

Money, education and political influence were the three keys to advancement. They were required in that order, although none of them was much use without the others.

Political influence could be found in the House of Commons. Helping the king in his policies, by voting the right way, was one way to success.

Education, another key, included schooling in arithmetic, history, geography, and perhaps even a little science, although Greek and Latin remained the basis of it. This kind of education was now found in the new private and state 'grammar' schools. These schools had taken the place of monasteries and the courts of noblemen as places where the sons of gentlemen should go. Some went on to become apprentices to wealthy crafts-men and merchants. Others crowded the Inns of Court, the law colleges in London, for university work.

One thing did not change. In the same way as the feudal squire learned to speak well, so the sons of the new squires were taught a classic manner of speech. It became known as the King's English. Even today an Englishman's class in society is usually clear from the way he speaks.<sup>1</sup>

Money, the first key to advancement, was generally found in farming sheep. The path to wealth was a path of wool, because the market for woollen cloth was vast. For years merchants and squires had been eagerly buying land for sheep-farms. In fact, by Henry VIII's reign, there were about three times as many sheep as there were people.

A new search for wealth from wool soon changed the English social scene completely. Let us see how it happened.

Land-lords were continually trying to find ways of increasing their flocks. Forests were cleared and waste-land re-claimed, but that was expensive. The value of existing grass-lands quickly grew.

<sup>1</sup> The King's English of the upper and middle classes developed from the common speech of Londoners. Common London speech, particularly the dialect called 'Cockney', is difficult for others to understand. So are the country dialects. Yorkshire speech, for example, is very strong and thick. It sounds strange to a man living 200 miles south in Kent.



Then, as land values increased, so also did rents. And rising rents could be met only by increased profits from the sale of sheep, wool and cloth. But high rents meant low profits. The circle could not be broken. More land must be found cheaply. Many land-lords whose demesnes were fully stocked with sheep began to turn to the holdings and common lands of the villagers.

The common land, or 'commons', had always been open for use by the villagers, and had been reserved for them. There were maps and papers proving this, although on many estates these records had been destroyed during the Peasants' Revolt 150 years before.

Peasants' private holdings were even more easily proved. Nevertheless, there were several ways in which a tough land-lord could get rid of a difficult tenant, both inside and outside the law.

Already it was difficult for peasants and yeomen to compete with the gentleman farmer. He could afford to replace the ox by the horse as puller of the plough. Although the ox was cheaper to keep and feed, it did only half as much work in a day as the horse and therefore was less economic.

Without land, the peasant could not compete with the squire at all.

Peasants who were turned out of their holdings seldom found work anywhere else on the land. Sheep require little labour. For such people there was no choice but to leave their village, the place of their birth, and go to the town.

So the poor were sacrificed to the need for economic change. Whole villages became deserted and died away. Landless peasants and their families again appeared on the roads, forced there by the enclosure of their holdings or the common land. They were called 'sturdy beggars'—healthy and active people, able and willing to work, but for whom no work could be found.

The sturdy beggar was a social problem to which responsible men now applied their brains. Followers of the New Learning suggested that government should try to cure such evils. This was a new idea. In the past, people had seen government itself as a kind of evil. But now the New Learning seemed to point the way to a development of skill in governing. Clever and far-sighted government officers could, it was thought, lead people to the good life. The chief believer in this view was Erasmus's supporter and friend, Sir Thomas More.

More was a lawyer who was interested in politics. He had been a



member of Parliament and had worked for Henry's father's chancellor, John Morton.

Sir Thomas More believed that reform was required in the state—that is, that the country's social and economic ills should be cured. The economy was growing very rapidly. Foreign markets had opened up for English goods, especially for woollen cloth. The island was, as we have seen, full of sheep. More wrote a book which today we would describe as a work of political science.<sup>1</sup> In it he covered almost the whole condition of man. Although the enclosures were one of the worst evils affecting the poor people of his time, More pointed to other, more general evils also.

The rich were getting richer in a society which offered much opportunity. Of course wealth and high position in a free society could be lost just as quickly as they could be gained, and much more easily too. But the gentry, 'the new men', were riding high on the top of an economic wave.

The poor, on the other hand, were getting poorer. As the demand for goods increased, so prices increased. In less than a life-time the cost of most necessities almost doubled.

This was a rate of change unknown in the middle ages. And change was a thing which uneducated peasants could not hope to understand. The sturdy beggar stood at the bottom of the new economic scale.

Another general evil was the behaviour of the Catholic church under Thomas Wolsey. In the business of enclosures, the country gentry had been joined by the abbots of the church. Their vast estates had become huge sheep farms. Sir Thomas More was a firm Catholic; but he believed, like Erasmus and others, that both the church and the state needed reform.

The friars had shown that the Christian way of life could be applied by working among the people. The monks had made the mistake of mixing Christian values with big business. More and the reformers believed that the church generally should try to become purer and thus be a better example of Christian values.

It is difficult to realize how big the church was. Besides the monasteries, there were about 9,000 parsons taking tithes in country parishes. Some rectors had become wealthy farmers, working glebes up to

<sup>1</sup> It is called *Utopia*. It shows, as though in a dream, the way to a world of peace and plenty.



forty acres—over eight square kilometres—in size. In about 15 dioceses, there were bishops with incomes larger than those of most rich merchants. And some bishops held more than one diocese. The proud Wolsey himself had three.

But the greatest wealth lay in the 500 monasteries; and ‘the new men’, the squires and merchants, who scratched and scraped for wealth, knew it. Greedy eyes began to turn towards the monastic lands.

### *The Reformation*

Henry VIII’s chancellor, Thomas Wolsey, had become a cardinal of the Catholic church—that is, the pope’s chief officer in England. Henry was content, for nearly 20 years of his reign, to let Wolsey govern the country. And Wolsey governed with all the authority of the church.

Henry himself was a firm Catholic. He had written against those who attacked the authority of the Roman church in Europe. He had been given, by the pope, the title ‘Defender of the Faith’—that is, the Roman Catholic faith.

The time came when Henry realized he would never get a son from his Catholic wife, Queen Catherine. Their only child was a daughter, whose name was Mary.

Henry looked for a separation from the queen. He wanted to marry one of her gentlewomen, Anne Boleyn.<sup>1</sup> He told Cardinal Wolsey to arrange with the pope for an end to his marriage, a divorce.

Wolsey failed. The pope refused to allow a divorce; and Catholics said that without his permission the marriage could not end.

Henry turned against the pope. Wolsey was dismissed, and Sir Thomas More became chancellor.

A new parliament was summoned, the ‘Reformation Parliament’. It declared the king to be head of the English church, in place of the pope. Henry secretly married Anne Boleyn.

A new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, declared that the king’s marriage to Catherine had never been lawful because she had been his brother Arthur’s wife. Thus Catherine was Henry’s sister by marriage. Not even the pope, Cranmer said, could excuse something which the Bible said was unclean.

A few months later the new queen, Anne, gave the king a child. But it was another daughter. Her name was Elizabeth.

<sup>1</sup> Who had been loved by the poet Sir Thomas Wyatt.



These events shocked many Catholics, in whose view Henry's divorce from Catherine was not lawful. They said that the king now had two wives. The pope angrily excommunicated both Henry and Cranmer. But Cranmer, as archbishop of Canterbury, now saw himself as chief minister of an English, or 'Anglican', church under Henry. He had no duty to the pope—the Bishop of Rome'. Out of these different views the Church of England, as separate from the Roman Catholic church, was born.

Thus also, Henry obtained authority over the Anglican church. Already he had complete control over the English state. At the age of 43, he had more power than any English king before him. Past kings had merely been first among the nobles of England and never rulers of the church of England. They had been addressed as 'Your Grace', like any duke or archbishop. King Henry was now addressed as 'Your Majesty'—a lonely emperor, high above all others.

Nevertheless, this great ruler did not have unlimited power. He could only go as far as public opinion would let him. He knew that he needed Parliament to make his actions lawful, and it was to the Reformation Parliament that he now turned. This long parliament sat for 7 years.

The House of Commons, which was full of 'the new men', reflected popular feeling against the old church. The priests and monks had been important in society. By church law they could not marry, but many were seen to have women and children. Since Saxon times they had claimed to be leaders of thought, but many were no better than the peasants whose tithes they took. They preached against riches, but people said that many of them lived like princes.

Above all, the gentry in the Commons remembered the vast income from monastic lands. Every year huge amounts went in the form of taxes to the pope in Rome.

Certainly Henry knew that the monastic income was many times greater than his own. All the capital left by his father had been spent. The cost of government was increasing yearly. He needed cash.

Henry appointed the secretary of his privy council, Thomas Cromwell, as his agent for robbing the church. This clever and merciless man served his master well. For 5 years he worked against the abbots and the priors without pause. He made use of 'commissioners', officials who went from monastery to monastery listing the wealth of each.



Starting with the smaller priories and working up to the great abbeys, Cromwell ordered that all of their property should be transferred to the crown.

The pope was helpless. The Reformation Parliament forced the clergy to admit that 'the Bishop of Rome no longer has authority in England'. New laws said that obeying him was treason. Refusing to accept Anne Boleyn as queen, and her daughter Elizabeth as heir to the throne, was also treason. It was dangerous to sympathize with Catherine's daughter Mary, the first bom.

Sir Thomas More, the gentle and honest statesman, refused to sign the promise which bound people to the new laws. He was put into prison and condemned by trial as a traitor. As he knelt at the block, waiting for the axe, he moved his beard to one side. 'It would be a pity,' he said, 'if that should be cut, which is not guilty of treason.'

Other followers of the old religion also died. Among them were monks who resisted the king's officers at monastic gates. The monks and nuns who went willingly from their homes were found work or given small pensions, while most of their tenants stayed on the monastic lands. But servants in many abbeys and priories were thrown out and went to join the sturdy beggars. The stone buildings of the monasteries were left bare. Even lead from the roofs was removed, and sometimes the stones too were carried away.

In the north, the Catholics were strong. The common people there rose in anger when they saw the old religion attacked in this way. Several thousands moved into York and other cities in a rebellion known as 'the Pilgrimage of Grace'. They said that the dissolving of the monasteries had gone too far. They demanded that Cromwell be dismissed.

It was no good. 'Hang them up in trees,' the king commanded. The leaders and twelve abbots lost their lives. Many people thought of them as martyrs.

Thomas Cromwell became known as 'the hammer of the monks'. Much of the land which he took from them was given or sold to 'the new men'. The squires, merchants and lawyers who had supported him in Parliament and the civil service must have their rewards.

The men who received the estates of the dissolved monasteries were, under the king, the new rulers of England. Nearly all of them were, like Cromwell and Cranmer, from the middle class.



These people were anxious to see the Anglican church made strong. They welcomed a new English Bible which Cranmer persuaded the king to authorize.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England became known as a Protestant church, a church of people who joined the protest against any attempt to stop the Reformation.

But meanwhile there were many people in the church who remained Catholics. One was the Duke of Norfolk, the most important peer in England. Anne Boleyn was a member of his family.

Curiously, the king was another who wanted to remain in the Catholic faith, although events led him the other way. He had become tired of Anne Boleyn, who had failed to produce a male heir. Her only child was Elizabeth. The king's inquiring eyes had noticed a young Protestant lady of the court, Jane Seymour. Anne was quickly brought to trial for crimes which could not be proved. She was condemned and executed, nevertheless. Henry married Jane Seymour two weeks later.

In the following year Queen Jane was brought to bed for the birth of a child. She died after the birth; but the baby she gave to the king was, at last, a boy—Edward.<sup>2</sup>

The court was now divided between Cromwell and the reformers on the one hand, and the Duke of Norfolk and the Catholics on the other. The reformers included Cranmer, the Protestant bishop Latimer, and Queen Jane's relations, the Seymour family. The country as a whole, however, was not yet divided. There were many middle views between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic. Honest men were continually changing their opinions. Men who were less honest sought gain from following whoever seemed most likely to succeed.

The king, trying to balance the scale, moved this way and that. He burned Protestants and hanged and beheaded Roman Catholics who refused the new laws. Cromwell employed secret agents to report all treason. The reign had become a reign of fear and blood.

Cromwell wanted to move further towards the Protestants. He arranged for Henry to marry Anne of Cleves, a Protestant state near Flanders. Henry wanted a description of Anne. 'Everyone,' reported Cromwell, 'praises her beauty both of face and body.' He compared her with the golden sun and the silver moon.

<sup>1</sup> 'Matthew's Bible', otherwise known as 'the Great Bible', by Tyndale, Coverdale and Rogers.

<sup>2</sup> See the plan on page 112.



Henry was delighted. He went down the river Thames to meet her; but then he discovered the truth. Anne was a plain, fat woman. ‘What you have brought me,’ he complained to Cromwell, ‘is a Flanders mare.’

The Duke of Norfolk seized the opportunity to work against Cromwell. He arranged for Henry to meet another girl from his family, Catherine Howard.<sup>1</sup> The ageing king fell in love with her at first sight. Quickly he divorced Anne of Cleves, and Cromwell was dismissed.

Catherine Howard was a Catholic. The reformers were, for the moment, out of the royal favour. Cromwell was accused of heresy and was executed. It seemed as though the pace of the Reformation might now slow down.

But Catherine kept a foolish love for a cousin, Thomas Culpeper. It was discovered, and Catherine was beheaded in the Tower, on the same spot as Anne Boleyn. She had been married less than 2 years. Few people either approved or were surprised.

The terrible old king, whom everyone at court feared, still remained generally popular, however. He had kept ‘the king’s peace’ with surprising success in a time of adventurous change. He had encouraged local government from the roots, by supporting the J.P.s and parish councils. He had given the country complete independence from the influence of the pope and from the old enemy, France. Soon England would face another powerful Catholic nation: Spain.

### *The two Protectors*

Henry VIII was now a sick man. He had a disease which grew steadily worse until it killed him. In his last three years he was nursed by his sixth wife, a sensible little woman named Catherine Parr.

In his old age he fought and won a new war against Scotland, leaving that kingdom under the rule of a child queen, Mary.<sup>2</sup>

His own daughter Mary<sup>3</sup> remained a firm Catholic, as her Spanish mother Catherine of Aragon had been. Henry told Parliament to make her birth lawful; but he would not leave her the crown.

His second daughter, Elizabeth, child of Anne Boleyn, was 14. She

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 135.

<sup>2</sup> Later called Mary, Queen of Scots. See the plan on page 112.

<sup>3</sup> Later called Mary Tudor.



was left in the care of Catherine Parr, who became a good friend to her.

His son Edward, aged 10, child of Jane Seymour, became Edward VI. But this was only after the old king had fought one last battle. He must make sure that Edward had no rivals.

Henry was afraid that the old Duke of Norfolk, the chief peer in the country, would seize power and give the crown to his own son, the Earl of Surrey.<sup>1</sup> So Henry aimed one last blow at the Catholic nobility. Norfolk was arrested and Surrey was killed. Norfolk himself was saved from execution only by the king's death.

Norfolk remained in prison, however, because the Protestants kept him there. The power behind the boy king was a Protestant reformer, Edward VI's Seymour uncle, the Duke of Somerset. He became 'Protector of England'.

Somerset would be called a left-wing liberal if he were alive today. The Seymour family was at the front of the reform movement. Its head, the Protector, with the help of Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Latimer, soon carried the movement several steps further.

Somerset took over Catholic wealth and used some of it to start schools for teaching Latin grammar. They were called 'Edward VI grammar schools'. Cranmer produced a prayer book for all Anglicans to use in church. It was in English instead of Latin, a language which only educated people understood. Latimer, meanwhile, preached for the poor against the rich.

'In times past,' Latimer said, 'men were full of pity. But now there is no pity, for in London their brothers die in the streets from cold. They lie sick at the doors between the door-posts, and then die of hunger. You land-lords, you rent-raisers, I say you have for your possessions too much. . . . It is the King's honour that the commonwealth be advanced.'

The commonwealth. The commons' wealth. It is in Edward VI's short and unhappy reign that we first hear the word. It was known also as 'the commonweal', and it meant the welfare—the economic and social condition—of the 'commons', or common men. There should be a tax on sheep, the reformers said, with the land-lords bearing the greater part, and the peasants would be the gainers.

Somerset worried about the poor commons, many of whom were

<sup>1</sup> Henry Howard, the poet,



sick, starving and without work. He regarded the commonweal as a kind of crusade. However, the news that something was going to be done for them stirred the peasants into action. Rents went on rising. The enclosures still continued. In some counties a third of the corn-land had, by now, been fenced in for sheep. Soon there were rebellions from Norfolk in the east to Cornwall in the west.

The rebellion in Norfolk was put down by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, a member of the Protector's regency council. Dudley was the 'strong man' of the government. He proved to be as much without mercy as Thomas Cromwell.

Somerset was dismissed because of the troubles. He was arrested, put into the Tower, and later executed.

Dudley, now chief minister, had great influence over the young king. Edward VI was a serious boy whose short life seemed spent in books. Protestant teachers stood around him day and night. His weak chest needed the open air, but his studies of Greek, religion and politics kept him indoors and away from his people.

It is said that he laughed only once. That was when he remarked on the legend of St George, the national saint and hero of England. The legend says that St George, riding a splendid white horse, fought a huge dragon. He pulled out his sword and then killed the dragon with his spear. 'And what,' Edward asked, 'did he do with his sword meanwhile?'

Edward generally had little reason for laughter. Dudley was a frightening person whose anger terrified all around him. He wanted to continue Cromwell's work of robbing the monasteries by robbing the churches also.

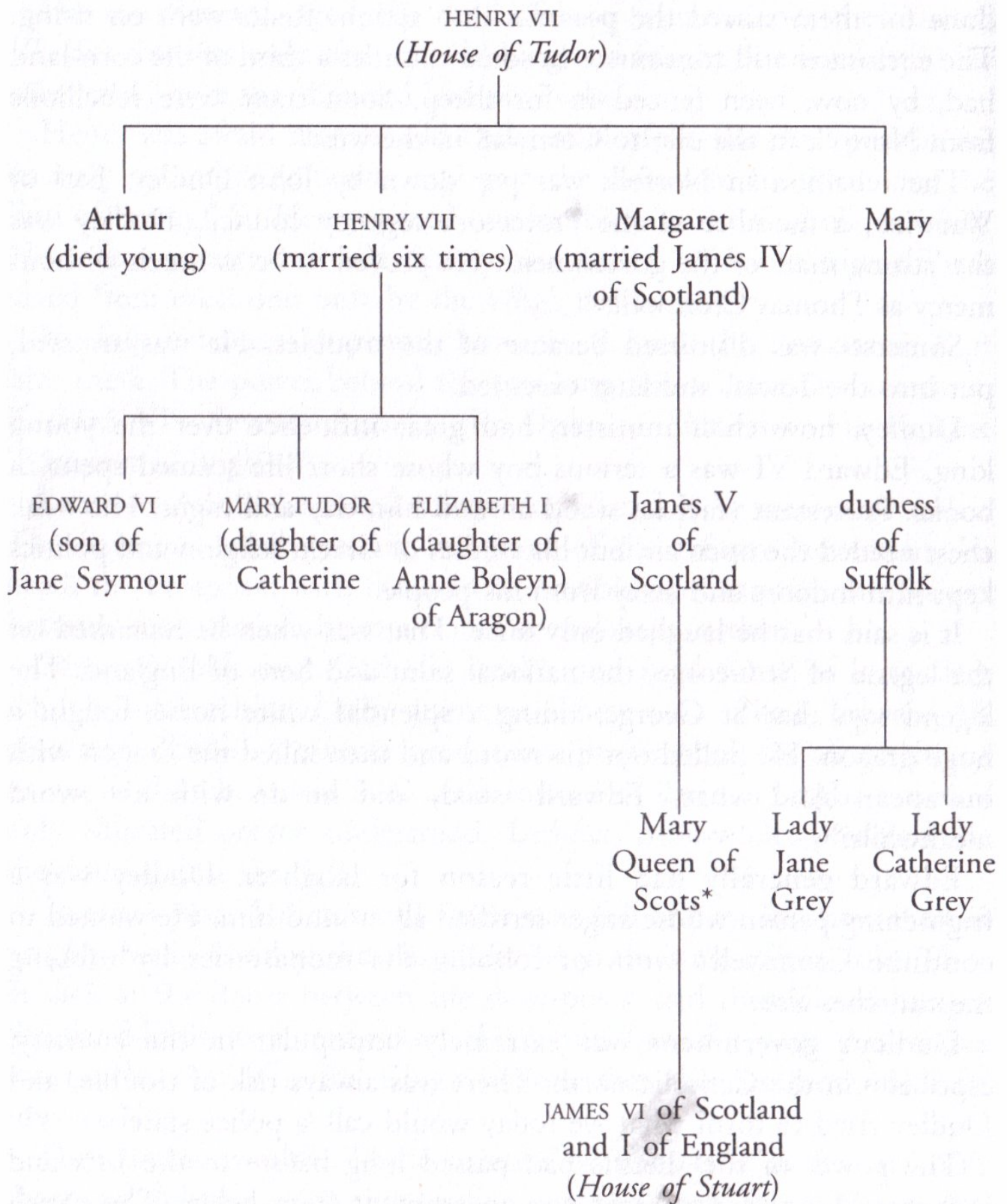
Dudley's government was extremely unpopular in the country, especially in the Catholic north. There was always risk of trouble, and Dudley tried to form what we today would call 'a police state'.

The power of the sheriffs had passed long before to the J.P.s and jury-men. Local government was government from below. The parish and town councils, the common law and petty sessions were all in direct line from the old, democratic, Saxon moot. It was difficult to make sure that central government policy was properly effective in districts far from London. A strong chain was needed to tie local government to Westminster.

A new kind of central government officer was therefore appointed



# THE TUDOR LINE



\* Married (1) king of France, (2) Henry Stuart, earl of Darnley, (3) James Bothwell.



in each county. This was the lord lieutenant. The duties of lords lieutenant were to control the work of J.P.s and to be generally responsible for such things as organizing militia and collecting taxes. They were really a kind of military governor. Dudley was determined to govern the provinces with an iron hand.

Dudley got the title Duke of Northumberland. His position depended entirely on his power over the boy king, because all men, even Protestants, disliked him.

Edward was dying, however. He had a bad cough and continually felt faint. His limbs were swelling.

The new duke was frightened. Henry VIII's last wish, expressed by an Act of Parliament, had said that the next heir to the throne was Mary Tudor, a Catholic. Northumberland had worked hard against the Catholics. The Tower was full of them. He knew that Catholic rule meant death for him.

Northumberland had an unmarried son, Lord Guildford Dudley. Now he arranged for Dudley to be married to Lady Jane Grey, the 16-year-old daughter of the Protestant Duke of Suffolk. Lady Jane had some royal blood on her mother's side;<sup>1</sup> and she was also very popular. Northumberland hoped that the people would accept her as queen.

But to make Lady Jane Grey queen before Mary and the princess Elizabeth was a violent plan. The dying Edward agreed to it, so that the country might be kept Protestant, but most people were shocked.

When Northumberland marched with an army towards Mary's country house, her supporters rose against him. Northumberland was driven back to London. Then he, Guildford Dudley, Lady Jane and her father Suffolk were all sent to the Tower. There they were joined by poor Archbishop Cranmer.

The Catholics were set free. Mary Tudor became queen. And Northumberland, as he had feared, lost his head on the executioner's block.

### *The Protestant struggle*

Mary Tudor had taken great risks in remaining true to her Catholic faith. Several times, under her father and her brother, her life had been in danger. The country had been moving further and further

<sup>1</sup> See the plan opposite.



away from the old religion for 20 years. Queen Mary's single aim now was to take it back again.

She felt that she lacked time. Already she was in her middle years, and she had no son to follow her. The next heir to the throne was her half-sister Elizabeth, who was a Protestant.

After Northumberland's unpopular rule, Mary came to the throne among scenes of great joy. The London crowds threw their hats in the air, cheering wildly. The church bells rang and people feasted in the streets. It was like a saint's day.

Mary almost was a saint, but her view was narrow. She did not have the good sense of her father, old King Henry. She could not, or would not, balance her policies to suit the mass of her people.

The Spanish blood of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, was in Mary Tudor. A step on her path back to Rome was marriage to a Catholic. That seemed natural, but the husband Mary wanted was Philip, prince of Spain.

Within a few months there were rebels in the streets of London, ready to pull her down and crown her sister Elizabeth instead.

The trouble was that many ordinary English people of that time thought of Spain as a country full of Jesuits, fanatic priests who wanted the whole world Catholic. The tool of the Jesuits was the Inquisition. Officers of the Inquisition were like secret police. They spied on non-Catholics, and arrested many as heretics. Often the heretics were tortured. If they did not accept the ideas of the priests, they were burned to death. Englishmen feared and hated the Inquisition.

'We will not be under the rule of proud Spaniards or strangers!' the rebels cried. A dead dog, with a rope round its neck, was thrown in through Mary's window. 'Hang all Catholic priests!' a message on it said.

The rebellion was led by two men: Sir Thomas Wyatt<sup>1</sup> and Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon. Courtenay's family was in the Yorkist line. He wanted to marry the princess Elizabeth. Then York and Tudor would rule England together.

But Mary showed her father's courage in this time of danger. In a stirring speech she reminded the London crowds that the throne was hers by right. She meant to marry Philip; although he would not be

<sup>1</sup> A courtier, knight of the shire, and son of the poet.



king after her death, and power to appoint people to offices in the state would be kept from him.

Mary won. The rebellion failed. Wyatt and Courtenay were imprisoned. Elizabeth was taken to the Tower for questioning, and for many weeks afterwards her life was in danger.

Mary's nature was good and kind, but she was determined to make the country safe for Catholics. The leading Protestants must be destroyed.

She was pushed on by her Spanish advisers, and now she showed little mercy. Wyatt was led out from the Tower and executed. So were Lord Guildford Dudley, the sweet young Lady Jane Grey and her father, Suffolk. Courtenay was sent out of the country. About 100 of Wyatt's followers were hanged.

Mary then married the Spaniard, Philip, and shortly afterwards the government applied to the pope for official permission to rejoin the church of Rome. The pope sent a new cardinal to England, the first since Cardinal Wolsey. Mary's work now seemed to be complete.

When Cardinal Pole arrived, he became the queen's chief adviser. Soon afterwards, the old laws against heresy were renewed. The punishment was burning.

The leading Protestant church-men were declared guilty and condemned. Chief among them were Archbishop Cranmer and the bishops Latimer and Ridley. 'Play the man, Master Ridley!' said Bishop Latimer, as chains bound them both to the fire, 'We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out.'

Old Cranmer also ended his life bravely. While he lay in prison, awaiting death, he was persuaded to recant. That is, he signed a paper admitting that his Protestant ideas were false. Then he was shown to the people and told to repeat his recantation publicly. He refused. The fire was lighted. Cranmer pushed into it the hand which had signed his recantation, and he watched it slowly burn.

Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were the chief martyrs of the Protestant church.<sup>1</sup> Latimer was right: they had lit a flame which spread far and wide. Almost 300 people chose death in Mary's reign rather than return to the Catholic faith. Many of the burnings were at Smithfield,

<sup>1</sup> A few years later their stories were recorded by a Protestant clergyman named John Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*.



a market-place in London. The fires of Smithfield gave the queen a name: Bloody Mary. That is the name by which she is often remembered today.

Ordinary people were deeply shocked. The martyrs had gained great public sympathy which was soon extended to the whole Protestant church. Protestants who escaped took strength from this sympathy. One day they would be able to build again. They waited. That time would come soon.

Queen Mary, though only 40, looked like an old woman. Her face was lined by worry. Her voice had become rough and loud like a man's.

In 5 short years she had split the nation. At the bitter end of her path back to Rome, she found with her only extreme Catholics like herself. They were called papists—supporters of the pope.

The important middle class was still mainly Protestant; and it was angry now, and looking to Elizabeth for a different future. Mary knew that when Elizabeth became queen she could, and probably would, undo all her work.

Philip also saw the way the wind was blowing. He had been a cold husband, spending little time in England. Now he was king of Spain. He decided to leave Mary to her troubles, but not before he had dragged England into a war against France.

That was an unhappy adventure for Mary. England lost Calais, its last colony, to the French. The walled town had been held by British soldiers ever since the Hundred Years' War. Now, for the first time since the Norman Conquest, England was without land in France. All greatness seemed to be coming to an end.

Mary was in the last year of her reign. She died declaring that the name 'Calais' was marked deeply on her heart. And among ordinary people there was an even greater sadness: a feeling of despair that England was becoming a colony of Spain. The government seemed now to move only with Spanish permission. Hatred of the Spaniards grew, especially among the Protestant middle class.

All classes of people turned to Elizabeth with relief. It is true that they would have preferred a king. Women were not made to rule; but Elizabeth was the daughter of a popular queen, Anne Boleyn. She was also the daughter of a great and popular king. She was a firm Protestant, too.

No one could guess the future, however, because Elizabeth's opinions



about most matters were very secret. She had learned the value of silence in a dangerous age.

### *Elizabeth I's England*

Once again, 'all the churches did ring, and at night men did make bonfires and set tables in the streets, and did eat and drink, and make merry, for the new queen'.

The new queen. Although she had learned to hide her thoughts, her manner was gay and open, and her eyes were lively and honest. Her hands were beautiful and full of expression. She had golden red hair. Her body was tall and commanding. She was a proper queen. She was clothed in rich purple when she rode at the centre of a thousand lords and ladies into London.

Elizabeth's reign was one of the longest in English history. Englishmen today think of it as also one of the best. She has been given the friendly title, 'Good Queen Bess'—'Bess' being a short name for Elizabeth. The country over which she reigned became known as 'Merrie England'.

England under Elizabeth has been compared with the human body. The queen-in-parliament was its head, guarding it from confusion and guiding its behaviour. The church-men were its eyes, 'to watch and not to sleep'. The judges and the magistrates were its ears to hear complaints. The great men—nobles and councillors, ministers and governors—were its shoulders and arms, to hold up the head and defend the commonwealth with might and force.

The men of the lower classes were merely the supporters of the body. Their duty was to work, to produce wealth, so that the commonweal could be developed.

This description is neat, but it is empty, nevertheless. It does not explain the developments of the remaining 45 years of Tudor rule. It does not explain the nation's progress. No human body can do great things without a soul.

The soul of Elizabeth's England was its national spirit. Men were not equal but they were free. There was freedom to mix with other classes and freedom of opportunity to make profits and to rise up the social ladder. Men of different social groups and even men of different religious opinions were willing to come together in order to defend these freedoms against threats from inside and outside the country.



There was another feeling, too, and it was possibly even more important for the history of the world. The Renaissance and the New Learning had led to a spirit of adventure. This spirit was given freedom by the political peace and unity which existed in England during most of Elizabeth's reign. Adventures of the mind led to splendid literature,<sup>1</sup> music and art. Adventures of the body resulted in the exploration of the oceans and the discovery of far lands. Most of the writers and explorers in Elizabeth's commonwealth came from the new middle class.

This national spirit and this spirit of adventure both sprang, mainly, from the Anglican Protestant society. And the strength of both of them lay mainly in two particular social groups: the yeoman and the squire.

Let us consider the yeoman first, and then the squire.

Some yeomen were rent-paying tenants, while others owned the land they farmed. Most worked a full day in summer and in winter, from sunrise till sunset. In summer that meant from 5 in the morning until 9 or 10 at night; in winter, from about 7 until 5 or 6.

A few yeomen still farmed strips, but in most parts of the country they now farmed fields surrounded by hedges, wooden fences or low stone walls. Many had done well out of the enclosures. They found that mixed farming—animals and corn—not only increased produce but improved its quality too. Fat pigs and cattle were sold at the London meat-market of Smithfield.

Some fished, especially from the coasts of Cornwall and Devon. Many of those who explored the wide seas came from those western counties. The east-coast fishermen took their catch for sale to Billingsgate, on London's river Thames.

Other yeomen grew fruit. Kent, 'the garden of England', was famous for apples, besides hops for beer. Fruit trees were also grown in the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire.<sup>2</sup>

But most yeomen had duties towards society, besides their own work. Every owner of property had to find one or two men, at least, to serve in the militia. Every village armed three or four men, or more, with weapons for national defence.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Shakespeare's plays, the first of which were written in Elizabeth's later years.

<sup>2</sup> Near Shakespeare's birth-place at Stratford-upon-Avon.



Yeomen also attended parish meetings and helped with other kinds of parish work. Some were church-wardens. Their duties included guarding church property and collecting the parson's tithes.

There were other officials of the village church, too. The vergers cleaned the church and showed people to their seats. The beadle was a sort of parish policeman. His duties included throwing dogs and noisy persons out of church. The sexton dug the graves and rang the church bell. The parish clerk kept the parish register—a record of births, deaths and marriages.

Some yeomen were also guardians of the poor. They collected alms—money, food and old clothes—for the poor people of the parish. The almoner then saw that these alms were shared out fairly.

One man in every parish was elected as village policeman, or constable. The constable's work included the arrest of sturdy beggars, lepers, madmen, and other poor and ill people found wandering from village to village. That was against the law. Such people were called vagabonds. They were punished by being locked, by hands or feet, in the village stocks.

The dangerous vagabond, the criminal who used violence, was called a rogue. Rogues were tied to whipping-posts and severely whipped. Sometimes they were put into 'houses of correction', work-houses—which were very like prisons.

The constable reported to the manor 'leet'. This was part court, and part council or local parliament. The president of the leet was usually the squire's steward. He was assisted by jury-men appointed from among the yeomen.

The court leet decided many local matters. It settled quarrels among the villagers. It named the crops to be grown in the coming year. It controlled the killing of wild birds, the trapping of deer in the forests and the catching of fish from streams. It gave orders governing the use of the village pound—the enclosure into which wandering cattle and sheep were put until claimed.

And if a fellow drank too much ale at the local tavern, and started fighting, he would probably find himself next morning in front of the squire's steward at the manor leet.

Many squires had the powers of magistrates because they were also J.P.s. The J.P. was the link between parish and county. He received his orders, through the lord lieutenant, from Her Majesty's privy council.



Many squires were also merchants, having been apprenticed in business. They were the link between village and town. The control of industry and trade by town councils was being replaced by government control, so here again the squire gained knowledge of national policies. Also, when in town, the squire could hear the latest news shouted by the town-crier, or could read it nailed up by the market-cross.

The country gentleman visiting the market town stayed generally with family relations. Sometimes, however, he stayed at one of the many inns. The inns were larger than the taverns and offered a certain amount of comfort—a private room, clean sheets and a feather bed. There were heavy curtains at the window and, in the cold of winter, a good warm fire.

At an inn, a traveller's horse was cared for by the ostler. The traveller's drink, which might be ale or wine, was brought by the pot-boy. His room, or chamber, was cleaned by the chambermaid. The inn-keeper was called the landlord or the host. Sometimes an inn was called a hostelry.

Many inns were centres of crime. Although a traveller was not likely to be robbed while actually staying at the sign of 'The Bear' or 'The King's Head', any bags of silver coin which he carried were carefully noted there. And next day, on the road, it was wise to ride fast, with weapons ready and with men for company.

The squire was glad to arrive home safe. The manor-house was a quiet and restful place. Many manors were set in green gardens full of rose-bushes and fruit-trees, and with grass paths for walking in between. Many of them were built in the shape of the letter E—for Elizabeth. Some were built of grey stone, and some of soft red brick, while others were black wood with white plaster in between. Most good houses had tall chimneys, because coal was now being burnt in fire-places, together with logs of wood.

The fire-places in the main rooms were huge, with wall-seats set almost inside them. There were window-seats for use in summer, set just below the 'casement' or window-frame. A squire could sit and admire the 'wainscot', the fine polished wood which lined the walls, from either end of the room. Some of the walls might also be covered with rich coloured cloth or 'tapestry', called the 'arras'. People admire Elizabethan manor-houses even today.



However, nations are not built by men who stay at home, even squires. All classes of people spent much of the time out of doors. They worked, and walked, and rode, even in the worst days of wind and rain.

Poor people walked, or rode donkeys, or used the public travel service on the main roads or 'highways'. The public service consisted of long wooden carts pulled by 6 or 8 horses. They went only on highways between a few towns, and they were very heavy and slow.

The surface of the highways was seldom hard. They were merely well-beaten earth tracks, muddy in winter and dusty in summer, and the surface was kept repaired by the parishes through which they passed. A yeoman was elected as surveyor by the parish council. His duty was to persuade other local yeomen to send labourers with spades and picks to fill in holes, clear ditches and dig out weeds.

The roads must be made safe for the queen's mail. All mail was carried by 'posts'. Posts were stopping-places, such as inns, where the carrier changed horses. All government letters were carried by royal couriers, managed by the queen's 'master of the posts'. Couriers carried urgent mail 'post haste'. This required horses at frequent posts, so that none would get too tired.

The chief cause of crime on the roads was the sturdy beggar. When rogues were caught they were whipped from village to village, all the way back home.

The problem of crime became slowly better as employment increased. There were new and growing industries: knife-making at Sheffield, tin-mining in Cornwall, iron-mining in Sussex, coal-mining in the north-east and in South Wales, and ship-building at Bristol and other sea-port towns.

Economic conditions in London were changing fastest of all. Elizabeth's capital, a city of over 100,000 people, was at least five-times larger than any other English town. It spread on all sides beyond its old walls and now contained fields, markets, court-yards and gardens, and nearly 100 churches too.

Inside the walls was 'the City'—the biggest trading centre in the world. Here were Flemish weavers of wool, silk merchants from Venice, French hat-makers, Italian silver-smiths and Dutch printers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Also bookshops selling translations of French and Italian books. Stories from Renaissance Italy are the background to several of Shakespeare's plays.



Here too were the offices of the great livery companies. Merchants met together for business at the newly built Royal Exchange.

One of the City's chief merchants was elected as lord mayor. His palace of offices was called the Guildhall. He and the elected aldermen formed the City's government. The City was almost a state within a state.

Two miles up the river Thames was another city: Westminster. The City of Westminster was the country's political capital, just as London was its business capital. The road between them, along the river, was called the Strand. There many of the rich merchants lived, their lovely gardens reaching down to the water's edge. Along the Strand, too, were the great royal palaces named Somerset House, the Savoy (which was used as a hospital), and Whitehall, where the queen lived.

Beyond the north wall of the City were London's 'commons'—the wide open play-grounds called Moorfields and Spitalfields. Here the apprentices went out for sport—hand-ball, football, racing, and archery. Here too the militia practised with their new muskets, long hand-guns. They were called the London 'train-bands'—that is, groups of tested or trained citizens, formed by the livery companies.

The fields and court-yards were used for duelling and 'fencing'. Like jousting in earlier days, sword-fighting was part sport, part a matter of chivalry or honour. In a duel, a touch with the sword was enough to decide the case. Duelling was a way for gentlemen to settle their quarrels without hurting large numbers of people; and fencing was practice for it.

London Bridge was still the only bridge across the Thames to the south bank. It carried houses and shops, several floors high. The narrow way between crossed a drawbridge, which could be pulled up to let ships through, and on which the heads of people executed were publicly fixed.

The borough of Southwark on the south bank was mainly fields,<sup>1</sup> but it was a terrible place for rogues and cheats. There was a bear-garden, where bears were attacked by dogs for sport; also there were cock-fighting pits, popular since Roman times. In Southwark too was the famous Tabard Inn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In one of which Shakespeare's Globe theatre was built.

<sup>2</sup> From which, since the days of Chaucer, pilgrims had started their journey south to Canterbury.



The Thames was filled with the masts of sea-going ships. The water-men, who lifted cargoes off them, also worked the small river-boats or barges. It was easier to go up or down river by water than by the rough roads. Certainly it was best to go by barge to Westminster or to the queen's other palace down river at Greenwich.

Thames water-men also took play-goers to performances in the court-yards of city inns.<sup>1</sup> Play-bills or programmes advertised not only the play but songs and dances too. The audiences were rough, and boys not women acted the female characters. The plays were acted in daylight in the open air. People could stand for a penny or pay more for a seat with a cushion on it. Some ate their dinners there, or played cards among the seats, or shouted at the actors on the stage. But if the play told a good story they did not lose interest in it.

People loved stories, and they loved music too. Both were contained in the ballad. Ballads were printed and sold on village greens and in city streets. Some told legends, some gave news of great events, and others described the hard conditions in which many people lived.<sup>2</sup>

Love songs were also popular. They told about hearts of gold, soft spring showers, autumn's harvest, and fate's cruelties to young lovers. They were written for simple and warm-hearted people.

On village greens, on the first day of May, young people danced round 'may-poles' in careless memory of some old Roman or Saxon ceremony. The may-pole, standing 6–10 metres high, was painted in bright colours and covered with flowers. The prettiest girl in the village was crowned as 'May Queen'. She represented all that is young and beautiful in the warm months of the year—young corn, hedge-row flowers, ripening fruit and berries—everything which people enjoy seeing in the English countryside. No one, not even Londoners, felt in the summer of Elizabethan England that those sunny fields and shady trees were very far away.

At court there were madrigals, sweet poems sung by four or five voices together. At court also, and in the great country houses, gentlemen wrote music for many sorts of stringed and wind instruments.

<sup>1</sup> The first theatres were not built until late in Elizabeth's reign; but earlier there were companies of actors who performed plays at inns and at the houses of great men. Shakespeare began as an actor.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the 'border' ballads were examples of the last sort. They described the hard life of the northerners who lived near the Scottish border. It was an area where raids, robbery and violence were frequent.



There were masques, too, in which poetry and music were combined with dramatic action.<sup>1</sup> And in whatever palace the queen stayed, there was always dancing.

Elizabeth's court was a gay and colourful place. The gentlemen wore stockings up to the knee, above that padded trousers called trunk hose (gathered in at the knee), and above that a shirt called a doublet with a jerkin over it, padded at the stomach. Ladies wore, under long, full skirts, a padded roll round their hips—a French farthingale. This farthingale made the skirt stand out square from the body. The dress above it had a pointed waist.

So gentlemen and ladies were both colourful, and both kinds of dress followed fashion. Everybody wore wide ruffs, stiff ornamental collars, round their necks. Many men also grew fashionable pointed beards.

The court was always moving, following the queen 'on progresses' all over the southern shires. The court travelled from Whitehall down the river to Greenwich, or up to Richmond, Hampton, Windsor and Oxford, with crowds of people kneeling as the queen passed by.

In each palace the queen enjoyed a private Withdrawing Chamber, where she lived with her ladies and received only her favourite friends. In the Privy Chamber she talked business with her councillors. To the outer Presence Chamber she came sometimes to mix with the mass of her courtiers and be publicly entertained.

Statesmen and ministers, ambassadors and couriers, scholars and courtiers, church-men and business-men, artists and musicians and writers, all gathered round her like insects round a bright light. Elizabeth's royal manner, her quick brain, her sharp tongue and her good common sense, all these turned confusion into order. The court was a place of good government.

It has been said that Elizabeth's courtiers came and went, but her ministers stayed for a life-time. All the chief officials lived at court. It was the place of their work and a second home. To be sent from court was not only to lose a good position; it was as bad as being excommunicated from church, or sent into the outer darkness. Perhaps it was even worse. 'Out of sight, out of mind' is an old English saying. With Elizabeth, it was often 'out of sight, in evil mind'. This queen liked to

<sup>1</sup> John Lyly was one of the most popular writers of entertainment for Elizabeth's court. He was purely a court writer, however—not like Shakespeare, who wrote for the common people too.



see everything that was happening in the politics of her kingdom. Her secretary of state kept royal spies everywhere.

A spy system was necessary to government in an unsafe age. So also was reward for good service. No public servant, from the lord treasurer downwards, ever received a proper salary. Officials depended instead on gifts and fees for services given. If a person wanted a permit, a licence, a charter, or a warrant from a government servant, he must give a bribe. Ministers were expected to pay for part of the administration themselves, out of their own pockets. They therefore expected payment for any special service which they performed.

Elizabeth herself was the chief receiver of gifts. Everywhere she went, the chief nobles opened their houses to her and entertained her at their own expense. Aldermen gave her bags of money in the hope of favour to their town.

But the queen was the government, and the government was the state, and the state was the commonweal, and the commonweal was the good of the people. It was all one thing, a unity, in Elizabeth's England, and it could not be separated.

### *The early years of Queen Elizabeth's reign*

Elizabeth I's aim was always a united, independent England. Unity meant also religious unity. The main problem was how to balance the desires of the Catholics with those of the Protestants.

The extremists among the Protestants became known as Puritans. They regarded Cranmer's reformation of the church as incomplete. They wanted even more change. They wanted to see the Anglican church purer, with a simpler form of worship.

Elizabeth had no strong opinions on religion. She tried to please both parties by choosing a middle way. The first parliament which she summoned made her head of the church. At the same time, changes were made to the English Prayer Book so that it would be more acceptable to Catholics. But Parliament did not represent Catholic feeling properly. It consisted generally of Protestant gentry.

Together with the problem of religion there was the problem of whom Elizabeth would marry. Elizabeth was the last of the Tudors. The question of who would reign next was important to all groups—Roman Catholics or 'papists', Anglican Catholics, Protestants and Puritans.



Parliament tried to persuade Elizabeth to say whom she would marry. But this queen, unlike Mary, played the game of politics well. She would not say. She knew the dangers of marriage. If she married a foreign prince, England might become dependent on another country, as it almost did under Mary. If she married an English noble, she would risk rebellion from people with views different from his.

Parliament wanted Elizabeth to marry a Protestant. And Elizabeth knew she must be careful how she treated Parliament, because she depended on it for money. Parliament still did not meet regularly; but the queen needed to summon it sometimes, and then she must listen to its requests before dissolving it. She could not manage without taxes, and she could make no laws, Acts, without the agreement of both Lords and Commons.

There was only one man whom Elizabeth was prepared to marry. That was Lord Robert Dudley, brother of Guildford Dudley and son of the Duke of Northumberland who had been executed in Mary's reign. But Lord Robert Dudley was already married. His wife, Amy Robsart, seldom appeared at court, and people whispered when they saw how much Elizabeth favoured him.

They whispered even more when, at the end of the second summer of Elizabeth's reign, Amy Robsart was found dead at the bottom of the stairs of her home. Her neck was broken. Some people said that Dudley was responsible.

Now Elizabeth could not marry Dudley without shocking people and causing trouble. However, she continued to treat him as her favourite courtier. Already she had given him the estate of Kenilworth castle. Now she gave him the title, Earl of Leicester.

Many people thought that Leicester behaved proudly and foolishly at court. Chief among them was Sir William Cecil, the queen's careful and trusted secretary. Cecil was a sensible, cautious man of the middle class. His family had become rich with a share of the monastic lands. Then hard work had brought him to the most important position in the government. With his cool brain and wisdom, Cecil was an almost perfect minister.

Cecil now was concerned with a proposal that Leicester should marry Mary, Queen of Scotland.

Mary, Queen of Scots, was a firm Catholic. She had once been married to the French king. During that time, Scotland had become



almost a colony of Catholic France. But the French king had died. The Protestants in Scotland, with Elizabeth's help, had shaken off the French hold on their country.

Mary was 10 years younger than Elizabeth. She was the granddaughter of a sister of Henry VIII and was next in line, after Elizabeth, to the English throne.<sup>1</sup> Many Catholics considered that her claim to the English throne was better even than Elizabeth's.

Mary refused Leicester, and married instead a Catholic Scottish noble, Henry Stuart, Earl of Darnley. Darnley was, after Mary, next in line for Elizabeth's crown. So, by marrying him, Mary greatly strengthened her own claim.

This young woman was beautiful, high-spirited and wild. Very soon she became tired of Darnley and began to favour her secretary, an Italian named Rizzio. Darnley became jealous of Rizzio and murdered him.

Mary did not forgive Darnley for this, although she took Darnley's name, Stuart, and gave it to their baby son, James. She became the lover of a wild Scottish baron, James, Earl of Bothwell. One night Darnley's house exploded, and Darnley's body was found dead in the garden.

People suspected that Bothwell was responsible for the murder, but nevertheless Mary married him. Although Scotland was a hard, wild place, this was a foolish thing for the queen to do. She was arrested but she escaped, leaving the Scottish throne to her baby son, James VI.

Mary Stuart reached England across the border. She was only 26, but well experienced in political adventure. Now, in the north of England, she was in an area where many people held firm to the old faith. Catholics everywhere turned to her. It became her life-long aim to gain the English throne.

As both heir and pretender to the throne, Mary Stuart was in a position as strong as Elizabeth's had been in Mary Tudor's reign. Elizabeth did not want to destroy her, because they were cousins, but she did keep her in a country house and put guards to watch her. There Mary quickly became the centre for opposition to the government at Westminster.

Mary caused trouble for many years. First there was rebellion in the north. Men gathered together from the wild open country and the

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 112.



scattered farming valleys. Several thousands stormed into the city of Durham and set up the Catholic religion there. The rebels included two northern earls and they were supported by the ambassador of Spain.

The Rebellion in the North, as it was called, was even more serious than the Pilgrimage of Grace had been in Henry VIII's reign. However, as before, people in the south remained loyal to the Protestant government. After a few months the rebels melted away, their leaders escaping across the border into Scotland.

And, as before, a cruel revenge was taken. Over 500 northerners were hanged, including at least one rebel from each village.

Although she did not touch Mary, Elizabeth was excommunicated by the pope for this action against the old church. Catholics in England were told from Rome not to obey the queen's laws.

The Puritans laughed. To them, the pope was no more than a Roman bishop. Many Anglican Catholics were worried, however. They could not agree with the pope that the queen was a heretic, but they were already experiencing difficulty in remaining loyal to a Protestant state. Catholic priests were kept hidden in many manor houses. They escaped search by lying in 'priest-holes', small rooms cut into the thick walls.

Although some Catholic families obeyed the law by going to the Anglican church, many more remained true to the old religion privately at home. They did not like the Protestant state, and lived in fear of the Puritans. They wanted a ruler whom the pope would accept.

The papists, the supporters of the pope, thought that this was their opportunity to bring Mary Stuart to the throne. Mary was already working in secret, whispering treason to discontented northerners, sending messages to Philip of Spain, and writing love-letters to the Catholic Duke of Norfolk, the grandson of Henry VIII's duke.<sup>1</sup> A secret plan, or plot, was arranged by an Italian named Ridolfi. He was the agent of both Mary and the pope.

For some years Mary had considered marrying Norfolk. Now the Ridolfi plot was for that marriage, and the murder of Elizabeth. Then Philip of Spain would send the Duke of Alva, his colonial governor in the Netherlands, with an army to enter and conquer England. With

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 135.



Elizabeth dead, Mary and Norfolk would share the English throne together.

Elizabeth's government discovered the plot, however, and sent spies to find the people who were in it. Norfolk was arrested and accused of treason. There was a rule that a man should be judged only by his peers, persons of equal rank. Norfolk was judged by the House of Lords and declared guilty.

Norfolk was, at that time, England's only duke. At first the queen refused to sign the order for his execution. At last, however, Parliament and the chief minister, Cecil, who now had the title Lord Burghley, together persuaded her to do it.

Norfolk was executed, but Elizabeth refused to move against Mary. Even the mass murder of French Protestants, the Huguenots, in Paris did not persuade her to protect herself against the Catholics. Huguenots who escaped to England joined with Puritans in demanding protection. They accused all Catholics of being traitors against the state.

It is true that some, like Mary Stuart, were working against the queen and government. They looked to Spain for support. After the Ridolfi plot, the Spanish ambassador was sent home; but Elizabeth would not risk war with Philip. Instead she secretly helped her 'sea-dogs' to worry Spain.

### *The nation gains strength*

Elizabeth's sea-dogs were really pirates. They raided the Spanish colonies in Mexico and the West Indies, and robbed the ships which carried silver back to Spain.

The silver mines of south America were a new discovery. Until the sixteenth century, the countries of Europe had looked only east for wealth, to the rich trade with Asia. England's position, on the west of Europe, was not then an advantage. Now, however, European countries were looking west, to America, for a new route to Asia. Now England was at the front of Europe, together with Portugal and Spain.

The English seamen had started as explorers later than their two main rivals, the Portuguese and Spanish. In Henry VII's reign an English ship had searched for a north-west passage to China, but it had been blocked by the north American coast. Then, 50 years later, English merchants had made a new effort to reach the wealth of Asia by sea. This time they had tried to sail north-east. Although a ship was lost



north of Russia, one of the leaders reached Moscow. A 'Muscovy Company' was started, for trade with Russia—'Muscovy'—and Asia.

Astonishing stories were told about the treasures of Asia. They came from the Far East—Japan, China, and the East Indies, which is now Indonesia. They came from India, Persia and Arabia. They came from the Near East—the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, which were called 'the Levant'. All this vast area was known to be full of rich things: silk, jewels, spices, medicines, ivory, gold, silver and pearls.<sup>1</sup> The problem was, how to reach this treasure? The Spanish in 'the New World', America, blocked the western route to Asia. The Portuguese were already round the southern coast of Africa and were masters of the eastern seas.

There was also a South Seas Project. People believed that a huge southern continent, 'terra australis', stretched from the Straits of Magellan to the East Indies. This idea increased after the Spanish discovery of the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. Somehow the English must get into the Pacific before it could be colonized by Spain.

Another search was made for a north-west passage round the American land-mass. The voyage of Martin Frobisher caused great excitement. Frobisher got part of the way round the north of Canada, and it was thought that he had reached China, or 'Cathay'. A 'Cathay Company' was started by the London merchants.

Africa too was famous at Elizabeth's court. It was the home of that legendary person, Prester John. Also it was the hunting-ground of the slave-traders. Slaves were taken from Guinea on the west African coast and sold to Spanish colonists on the island of Hispaniola—now Haiti and the Dominican Republic—in the West Indies.

The captain of the slave-traders was John Hawkins, a sea-going merchant from Plymouth in Devonshire.

Hawkins was the first of Elizabeth's sea-dogs. With Elizabeth's support, this bold captain tried to seize a share of Spain's colonial trade.

He was joined by his cousin, Francis Drake. Together Hawkins and Drake were attacked by the Spanish at a Mexican port. Four English ships were lost. Some of the seamen, captured by the Spanish, were tortured by the Inquisition. Hawkins and Drake escaped with two ships.

<sup>1</sup> An Elizabethan poet, Christopher Marlowe, reminded people about these things in two famous plays: *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus*.



After that, Drake became determined to fight his own war against the Spanish galleons, which were like castles floating on the sea. They contained soldiers besides sailors, and the biggest ones were often commanded by noblemen—the proud ‘dons’ of Spain.

Hawkins became controller of the queen’s navy. He built galleons which were smaller than the Spanish galleons but which could sail and turn more quickly. The Spanish galleons depended on closing with the enemy and putting men on board. The English galleons depended more on fire-power. The rows of cannon between their decks were able to deliver terrible ‘broadside’—when all the guns on one side of the ship shot together. Guns firing broadsides took the place of the long-bow as England’s most successful weapon in war.

Drake and the other sea-dogs now ranged across the Atlantic, from the Barbary coast of north Africa to the mainland of Spanish America, ‘the Spanish Main’. They attacked coastal forts, islands, and fleets of Spanish treasure-ships. They carried back to Plymouth and other English harbours cargoes worth thousands of pounds.

The captains were merchants and gentlemen mostly from the western counties of Devon and Cornwall. They dressed in armour for battle and fought with swords. The seamen were often their tenants. They fought with muskets and pikes. All sailed with the spirit of adventure, and in the hope of gold.

Elizabeth took a share in the gold and sent them back for more. Francis Drake came home from a three-year voyage round the world in his ship, the *Golden Hind*. Elizabeth pocketed much of the treasure which he had taken from the Spaniards, and then took the new Spanish ambassador to see the ship. She told Drake to kneel on the deck. Then, with the Spaniard watching, she touched Drake lightly on the shoulder with a sword and knighted him, saying ‘Rise, Sir Francis.’ It was a bold act. Open war with Spain was coming near.

The English successes at sea were signs of growing unity and strength. Like the yeomen of Agincourt, 250 years earlier, Elizabethan seamen were eager to follow good leaders into hardship and danger. At sea they lived on plain biscuit, salted meat and beer for month after month. Often the food went bad and the beer turned sour and they died from disease.

And the ships were not safe like ships today. A bad storm could turn them over. There were long hot periods of calm when men went



thirsty. There were not many dependable charts or maps, and sunken rocks could sink a ship very easily.

There was no comfort in the smoke of battle. If a cannon-ball took off an arm or a leg, there was no doctor to clean the wound. And there was no place to bury a man, except in the sea.

Nevertheless, men went to sea willingly. They went for money, to see the world, to strike a blow for England and the Protestant church, and to return safely if they could.

At home men lived a safer and more comfortable life. The commonweal was gaining strength. More people were now employed in the new industries, and fewer vagabonds waited on the streets.

New rules for the poor tried to separate the unemployed labourer from the professional beggar. Poor but honest people were called paupers. Some of them were kept alive in 'alms-houses'—buildings kept by means of alms. Alms came mainly from private hands, although some of the new rules provided public money also. In most parishes, poor law 'rates' were collected. So also were 'fines'—for example, 10 shillings a week from anyone who refused to attend Anglican church on Sundays.

The children of paupers were sometimes put to work as apprentices, under the control of J.P.s. An apprentice generally served in a trade or a craft for seven years, during which time he was not allowed to marry. At the age of 23 or 24 he could take a wife, and either hire his services to a master crafts-man or start a business of his own.

Wages for labour were fixed by J.P.s. They were told to fix higher wages for agriculture and industry than for trade. The queen's government was trying to control the economy on a national basis.

As the economy grew stronger, so freedom of opportunity spread, and the sense of social unity between classes developed. People whose interests point in the same direction soon develop a feeling of national purpose. That is what happened in Elizabeth's England. It was a smiling land. Only the religious argument, and the threat from Spain, continued to cloud the government's sense of safety.

On one side were the Puritans, urged on by those Huguenots who had escaped from France and were now working and preaching in England. On the other side were Mary Stuart and the Catholics, urged on by the recent arrival of Jesuit missionaries.

Every Protestant in Parliament, and every Puritan in England, knew that his own safety depended on the queen's safety. Elizabeth had said



that nobody should be killed for religious reasons. When Catholics were put to death, the reason given was always treason, not heresy. Chief among those who died was Edmund Campion, a Jesuit missionary. He was at first tortured and later hanged at Tyburn.<sup>1</sup>

The government minister most concerned with national safety was Sir Francis Walsingham, the queen's new secretary. Walsingham became secretary when Lord Burghley was moved to the position of Treasurer. While Burghley was a firm Protestant, Walsingham was an extreme one. This severe man held many Puritan opinions.

Walsingham as secretary had control of the secret service. His spies watched many of the active Catholics, one of whom was a gentleman named Francis Throckmorton.

Throckmorton was arrested and tortured. He admitted passing letters from Mary Stuart to people plotting rebellion against the queen. He admitted informing the Spaniards about places on the British coast where Spanish soldiers could land.

Mary was deep in the plot and so was the Spanish ambassador. The latter was sent home immediately, and this time he was not replaced. But Elizabeth still would not arrest Mary. She would not, either, allow the plot to be used as an excuse for open war against Spain.

She did, however, send the Earl of Leicester with an army to the Netherlands to help the Dutch rebels there. They were rebelling against the Spanish colonial governor, the Duke of Parma.

Leicester's nephew, Sir Philip Sidney, went with him. Sidney was one of the finest men of the time,<sup>2</sup> and was loved by all who knew him. At the battle of Zutphen, Sidney was wounded badly. A friend brought him a cup of water as he lay dying. He raised it to his lips, but then saw a common soldier lying wounded near him. 'Give it to that poor fellow,' he said. 'His need is greater than mine.'

That was the spirit of unity which bound the classes of society together. And it was the spirit with which the English met the storm which was now gathering against them. King Philip was building in Spain a huge fleet of galleons, an Armada. The plan was that this fleet should sail to Holland, pick up Parma and his army, and from there invade England.

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Campion, Catholic martyr, should not be confused with Thomas Campion the poet.

<sup>2</sup> And one of its finest poets.



*The glory of Merrie England*

Meanwhile Spain had conquered Portugal. Philip now controlled the world-wide Portuguese colonies together with Spain's. He also controlled the excellent harbours of Portugal. In these he could gather together the ships of his Armada.

If might was right, little England had no chance against the empire of Spain. The Spaniards had nearly 150 warships, and thousands of experienced soldiers to add to Parma's huge army in the Netherlands. The English, in their island fort, could only wait. They put their trust in God, and in Sir John Hawkins's new navy.

Elizabeth's ministers, however, were still worried by Catholic plots against her. Walsingham's spies watched Mary Stuart and secretly opened her private mail. A young courtier named Anthony Babington was now writing to her, pushing forward another plan to murder Elizabeth. When Mary in a letter agreed, Walsingham was at last satisfied; he had caught her.

Babington was arrested. He tried to save himself by giving more information against Mary. The government ordered that Mary be taken to Fotheringay castle in Northamptonshire for trial.

Elizabeth did not like it. Only she could sign the order for execution. Mary's son, King James VI of Scotland, wrote praying that his mother, as a Catholic queen, should be allowed to live. Kings and queens were like gods and goddesses, he said: they were above the law.

But Mary was declared guilty by 36 statesmen, acting as judges. Burghley, Walsingham and other members of the government worried for months, as still Elizabeth hesitated. Vast numbers of people in England were sure that Catholic Mary should be destroyed. Parliament had been demanding it for years. Now, with the might of Spain on the doorstep, there must be an end to treason within.

At last, Elizabeth agreed. The execution at Fotheringay is famous. Mary went to the block dressed in a black robe. She took this off before she knelt, and her clothes beneath were bright red, the colour of blood. The axe fell three times before her head came off; and when the executioner held up the head for people to see, false hair came away in his hand. Her real hair underneath was cut short; it had become quite white.

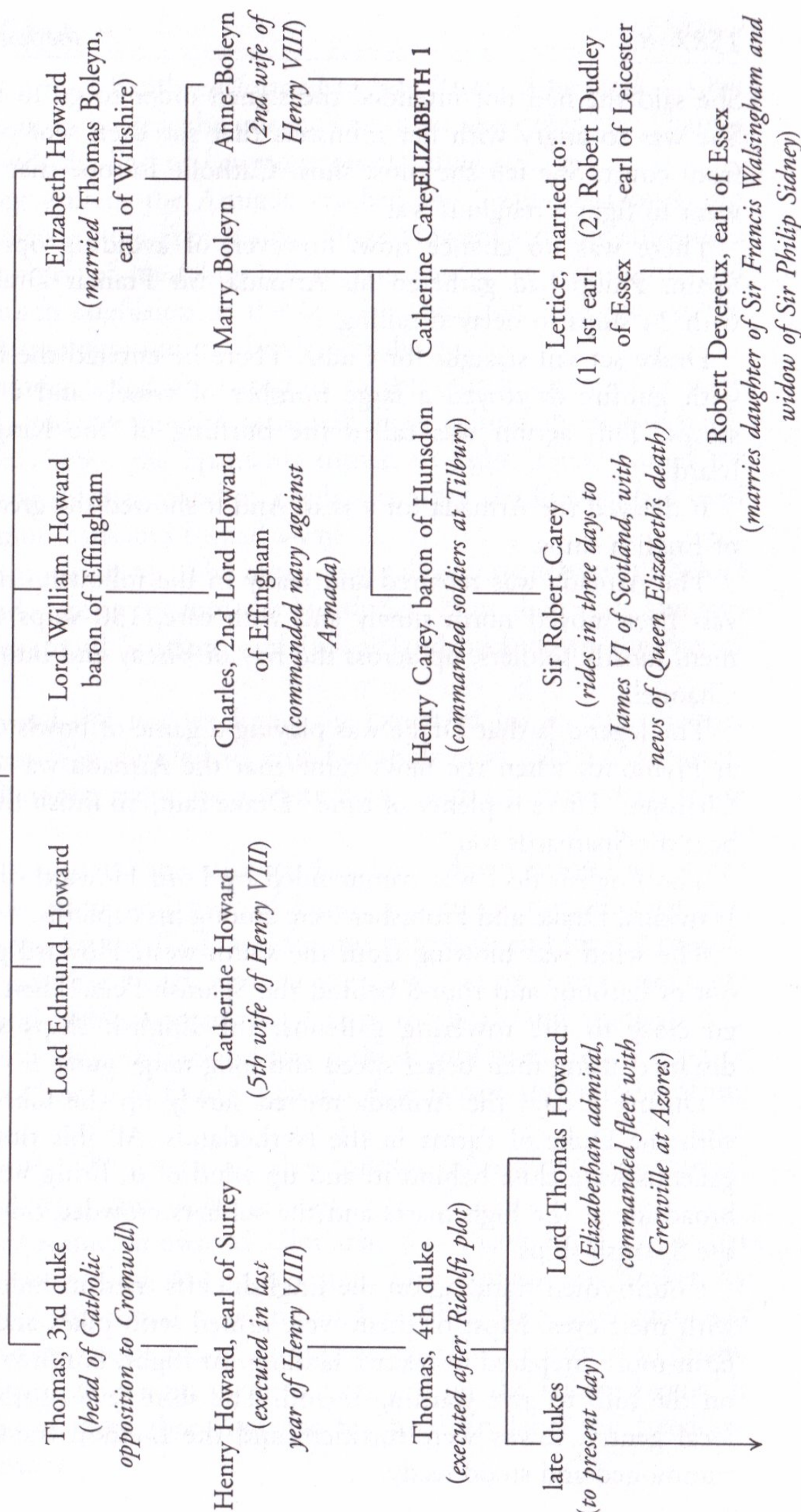
When Elizabeth was told about the execution, she seemed to despair.



# A NOBLE ENGLISH FAMILY

John Howard, 1st duke of Norfolk (killed at Bosworth)

Thomas, 2nd duke (won battle of Flodden for Henry VIII)





She said she had not intended the signed order to go to Fotheringay. She was so angry with her ministers that she even sent old Burghley from court. She felt she must show Catholic Europe that she did not want to fight a religious war.

There was no chance now, however, of avoiding open war with Spain. Philip had gathered his Armada. Sir Francis Drake was sent with 24 ships to delay it sailing.

Drake set sail straight for Cadiz. There he entered the harbour and with gunfire destroyed a large number of vessels and a quantity of stores. This action was called the burning of 'the King of Spain's beard'.

It delayed the Armada for a year. And it showed the great fire-power of English ships.

The Armada was repaired and ready in the following summer. The vast fleet moved north slowly and with care, 130 ships with 30,000 men, mostly soldiers, up across the Bay of Biscay and into the English Channel.

The legend is that Drake was playing a game of bowls on the green at Plymouth when the news came that the Armada was entering the Channel. 'There is plenty of time,' Drake said, 'to finish this game and beat the Spaniards too.'

The English fleet was commanded by Lord Howard of Effingham. Hawkins, Drake and Frobisher were among his captains.

The wind was blowing from the south-west. Howard got his ships out of harbour and round behind the Spanish fleet. Then, rather than go close to the towering galleons, the English ships shot from a distance, using their better speed and long-range guns.

During 8 days the Armada moved slowly up the Channel to join with the Duke of Parma in the Netherlands. All this time, Howard's galleons were close behind it, and up wind of it, firing broadside after broadside at the high masts and the soldiers crowded on the decks of the Spanish ships.

Countrymen standing on the English cliffs tried to follow the battle with their eyes. Most of them were armed with pikes and knives and farm-tools, prepared to resist a landing. At night, bonfires were lighted on the hills to give warning inland. The shire levies gathered, led by local gentry; towns were fortified; and the London train-bands were summoned and stood ready.



Two main armies had been formed to face Parma if he landed. One was in London to protect the queen. The other was down the Thames at Tilbury, with the Earl of Leicester commanding it.

While they waited, the Armada reached the Straits of Dover and paused at Calais on the French side. There Howard sent fire-ships into it—vessels empty of men but full of gunpowder. It was night, and there was much confusion as the Spanish ships ran into each other. One of them ran aground on the French shore.

The remainder sailed on eastwards to the Dutch coast. They were all scattered, and the English were still close behind. Near the sand-banks of Gravelines, the Spaniards turned to fight. They battled for 8 hours, losing ships aground on the banks, until the English had used all their cannon-balls and turned away.

Then a storm rose up. The remaining galleons turned north before the wind and were swept into the North Sea. Now their only aim was to get home, round Scotland and Ireland and back down the Bay of Biscay.

Lord Howard did not yet know the extent of his victory. Neither did his queen. She decided to visit her soldiers at Tilbury. She rode unprotected among them, on a white horse, with her royal dress white and silver.

‘God bless you all,’ she said, as they knelt down before her. ‘I am come, in the midst and heat of battle, to live or die amongst you all, to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too. I think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare invade the borders of my realm.’

Brave words. They stirred the courage of every Englishman, Catholic and Protestant, rich and poor.

Elizabeth became known as Gloriana, the queen of glory, and it seemed that even God was on her side. The Armada was broken by storms as it went round Scotland and Ireland. Ship after ship was thrown on to the rocky coasts, until fewer than half returned to Spain. In England people danced in the streets and on the village greens. It seemed clear to them that God had favoured England and freedom-loving Protestants.



God was a Protestant god, the Puritans said. Their political power was strengthened greatly. During the rest of the reign, they worked hard against the bishops, the 'prelates',<sup>1</sup> of the Anglican church.

But the Anglican church, the Church of England, was now more than a middle way which even extreme Protestants and Catholics could join. It had become a real religion, loved by the mass of people. Even the Puritans did not leave it. They tried to reform it from within.

Among the Puritan leaders was a man named Peter Wentworth, a member of Parliament. He was a great trouble-maker who spent as much of his life in prison in the Tower as in the House of Commons. Wentworth's religion was mixed with a love of liberty. In the Commons he was always quick to defend its rights, especially the right of free speech.

Free speech is more difficult to preserve in time of war than in time of peace. The struggle with Spain continued, particularly at sea. The defeat of the Armada was the beginning of the war, not the end. The English now tried to cut the supplies of silver reaching Spain from America, the New World.

Six ships commanded by Lord Thomas Howard were at the islands of the Azores, waiting for the Spanish treasure fleet. A large number of Spanish galleons appeared, too many for the English to attempt to fight.

Howard decided to retire. But one of his captains, Sir Richard Grenville in the British galleon *Revenge*, was trapped by 15 Spanish galleons. Grenville and his men were surrounded. They fought the Spaniards all that day and all that night, sinking two ships and damaging several more. At last they were conquered. Grenville died from his wounds, and the *Revenge* was sunk in a storm. Really it was a defeat; but English people remember such battles as victories and they describe brave men like Grenville as heroes in their literature. English ships were now ranging far and wide. Hawkins and Drake died of fever while on a voyage to the West Indies, but other captains and explorers continued their work. A gentleman from Devonshire, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, had claimed Newfoundland for Queen Elizabeth. Another gentleman from the same county, Sir Walter Raleigh,

<sup>1</sup> 'Martin Mar-prelate' was the pen-name of an unknown person who wrote tracts arguments, against the prelates. He was never discovered, although his printing-press was destroyed.



tried to colonize a part of the American coast which he named Virginia in honour of the unmarried—virgin—queen. Potatoes and tobacco were introduced into England from that colony, the tobacco being smoked in long clay pipes.

Sir Walter Raleigh was, for a time, a favourite courtier of the queen.<sup>1</sup> There is a legend that one rainy day he laid down his cloak in the mud for Elizabeth to walk on. But he lost his position at court to a new favourite, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. Raleigh served with Essex in a new attack on Cadiz. Two galleons were sunk, two were captured, and the town itself was taken by Essex's soldiers. Essex, who was younger than Raleigh and very good-looking, immediately became a national hero.

Raleigh was too often abroad. He was a great explorer of the New World. In that world was 'El Dorado', the country of gold, according to legend. Raleigh travelled far up the Orinoco river in the country now called Venezuela. He did not find El Dorado, but he and his friends never stopped believing it was there.

Other explorers gained fame by opening the eastern route to Asia. Ralph Fitch was a traveller who went overland to India, Burma, and Siam (now Thailand). Thomas Cavendish reached the south seas. John Davis was killed by Japanese pirates in Malayan waters. William Adams helped to build Japan's first navy. James Lancaster voyaged and traded in the East Indies (now Indonesia).<sup>2</sup> Such voyages persuaded businessmen to start the Levant Company and, what is more important in history, the East India Company.

### *Elizabeth's last years*

Events crowded very fast on the ageing queen. Leicester and Walsingham and Burghley were dead. Burghley's place as chief councillor had been taken by his son, Sir Robert Cecil. Parliament prepared a Poor Law Act which brought together all the rules which had been made during the reign for relieving the poor. Parliament also persuaded the queen to inquire into 'monopolies'—the rights sold to certain courtiers which allowed them complete control over the manufacture and marketing of certain goods. These monopolies had

<sup>1</sup> He also wrote poetry.

<sup>2</sup> The voyages of many Elizabethan adventurers were recorded in a book by Richard Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*.



led to high prices. They were much hated; except, that is, by the rich few who owned them.

Not only Parliament but young courtiers also were pressing for the great queen's attention. The young men were impatient. They wanted to make their mark on this adventurous new age.

The young man who pushed hardest, depending all the time on his charm, popularity and new-found power, was Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

Essex and Raleigh had been sent again to worry the Spaniards at sea. Philip had built a new Armada which must be destroyed. Also, their purpose was to capture a Spanish treasure fleet in the Azores. They failed in both things, although Raleigh successfully attacked and robbed a Spanish island. Essex returned with nothing.<sup>1</sup>

The queen was angry and commanded Essex to come to court. Essex refused, saying he was ill. When at last he appeared, the queen was kind to him; but a quarrel now started between Essex and her chief adviser, Sir Robert Cecil. This clever man said that the time had come to make peace with Spain. Essex said no. Elizabeth could not decide, but Essex thought she was favouring Cecil.

Essex had a bad temper. He stupidly turned his back to the queen. She, in great anger, hit him on the cars and told him to go to the devil. Essex swore, shouted, and put his hand to his sword.

Cecil realized that Essex was dangerous at court and persuaded the queen to send him to Ireland. In Ireland there was a rebellion led by the Earl of Tyrone.<sup>2</sup> Essex had orders to defeat and capture the Irish leader.

Instead, however, Essex made peace with Tyrone. Then he returned to England without permission. He arrived in the queen's room with weapons and with the dirt of travel still on him.

Secretly the queen loved Essex. He was upright, brave, and generally kind. But he was also proud, and he would not obey her orders. Also, he had many followers and supporters. Soon they were sweeping through the streets of London with the idea of destroying Cecil and Raleigh, and setting up Essex as head of the government.

Essex was arrested and brought to trial for treason. His chief accuser

<sup>1</sup> John Donne, then a young man, sailed on this voyage. He became famous as a poet over the next 20 years.

<sup>2</sup> Ireland was a wild and lawless place. Edmund Spenser, the poet, lost his castle to Irish rebels when working as a government officer there.



was a young lawyer named Francis Bacon,<sup>1</sup> who earlier had been his follower. Bacon, seeing how foolishly Essex behaved, now supported the Cecil party. Essex's recent actions certainly appeared like treason to the state. Bacon, who was a good lawyer, had no difficulty in getting him condemned.

The news of Essex's execution at the Tower disturbed the whole nation. He had been a great leader and an attractive man. Elizabeth regretted his punishment until her own life's end.

Elizabeth was old now, nearly 70, and very much alone. Already Cecil was writing to her heir, Mary Stuart's child, James VI of Scotland. Elizabeth became ill, and Cecil told her that she *must* go to bed. A spark of anger made her tell him: 'Must! Is "must" a word to be used with princes? Little man, little man—your father, if he were alive, would not dare to use that word.'

Elizabeth was the last English ruler who really ruled. Later kings could only share power; they could not govern. Parliament was becoming steadily more powerful, and more influenced by Puritan ideas. In this age of adventure, people had begun to think more clearly for themselves. The way they wanted to go was often not the way of kings, although kings could sometimes lend a guiding hand.

The Tudors, especially Elizabeth with her care of Parliament, had allowed the ground to be prepared for the growth of democracy. Also, it was now accepted that the state was responsible for the whole of society, particularly for relieving the poorer part of it by means of taxation of the rich. England was starting to become one of the greatest trading nations in the world. The prizes were great, but the winners would not be allowed to keep all.

Besides all this, the queen and her ministers had, in nearly 50 years of careful government, built up a wonderful sense of national pride. When Englishmen went overseas now and in future years, they went with the feeling that no place was likely to be as good as England. No foreign way of living was as good as the English way of life. Merchants and officials tried to plant their systems in far-away countries. For centuries people kept the idea of Elizabeth's England, 'Merrie England', as a land of milk and honey, rich and colourful, brave and free.

<sup>1</sup> The author of *Essays* about state policy, the general system of life, and the management of men. We shall read more about Bacon (and Raleigh) in the next chapter.



Of course this was not altogether true. Neither was Elizabeth a perfect ruler; but she was the best that England had yet seen. Now she lay, Gloriana, full of years, a little fevered and wanting sleep. The end was near. The archbishop asked if James VI of Scotland should become James I of England after she had gone. She would say nothing, but she bent her head gently in agreement.

Winter came. The old queen turned her face to the wall and sank into a deep sleep. Soon Sir Robert Carey, a gentleman of her court, was on horseback, riding fast to James VI at Edinburgh. The message he carried meant the union of two crowns, Scotland and England, into one united kingdom. It would be a union of crowns, although not yet a union of parliaments or peoples.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 4

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
		1485–1500		
Henry VII (1485–1509)	Maximilian I	Sonni Ali	Islam in Malaya	Columbus
		1501–10		
New Learning	Machiavelli	Askia Muhammed	Babur	Spanish in W. Indies
		1511–20		
Henry VIII (1509–47)	Luther	Portuguese in Zanzibar	Portuguese in Java	Cortez in Mexico
		1521–30		
Cardinal Wolsey	Charles V of Hapsburg	Leo Africanus	Suleiman the Magnificent	Magellan
		1531–40		
Reformation	Copernicus	Nzinga Mbemba	Humayun	Pizarro in Peru
		1541–50		
Edward VI (1547–53)	Society of	Jesus Sa'dids	Safavids in Iran	Search for North- west Passage
		1551–60		
Mary Tudor (1553–8)	Calvin	Monomatapas	Portuguese in Macao	French in Canada
		1561–70		
Elizabeth I (1558–1603)	Mercator's world map	Hawkins's slave voyages	Akbar	Spanish in Pacific islands
		1571–80		
Mary, Queen of Scots	William I of Orange	Paulo Dias	Nobunaga	Search for El Dorado
		1581–90		
Lord Burghley	Portuguese- Spanish union	Guinea Company formed	Toungos in Burma	British in Virginia
		1591–1603		
Shakespeare's first plays	Philip II dies	Fort Jesus, Mombasa	East India Company	Search for North- east passage



## *The Road to Democracy*

### *Puritans and Parliament*

James Stuart, the man who now became James I of England, had been king of Scotland for more than 30 years. As a child he had been controlled by the Scottish 'covenanters', followers of a great church reformer and preacher named John Knox. The Protestant church of Scotland—the 'Kirk', as it was called—was Presbyterian. It was ruled by 'presbyters' or ministers, who were elected 'elders' or aldermen, rather than by bishops and priests.

The Presbyterian Kirk was a model for the Puritans in England. They wanted control of the Anglican church by bishops and the king to come to an end. James I, however, was a firm believer in the 'divine right of kings'. That meant the right of the king to rule both church and state with responsibility to no one except God.

James's idea that God had given him the right to rule did not make him popular with the Puritans. They wanted to see the whole state, the whole commonwealth, including the church, serving God freely. Many of the Puritans were middle-class merchants and land-owners. They wanted also to see the king living out of his own pocket, not with money out of theirs; but James was always asking the House of Commons to vote for new taxes. They did not like it.

The English people generally did not respect their new king. Queen Elizabeth had earned their respect, but James talked too much and did too little. He spent money on masques<sup>1</sup> and other entertainment at court.<sup>2</sup> He favoured courtiers but failed to get the support of the gentry in Parliament. The common people seldom ever saw him.

At first he was saved by the last of the great Elizabethan ministers. The wise Sir Robert Cecil, who got the title Earl of Salisbury, became

<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson was the best writer of masques. He wrote plays also, but his best poetry is in his masques.

<sup>2</sup> Several of Shakespeare's plays were performed there. The character of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, written for a court performance, is a satire on Puritans.



lord treasurer. Peace was made with Spain. The government preferred peace because it saved money.

Sir Walter Raleigh was a problem and a threat to this peace, however. He was Spain's greatest enemy, and he was very powerful in the sea-going, Protestant west of England. Responsibility for putting him away was given to the government's chief law officer, the attorney-general, Sir Edward Coke.

The charge against Raleigh was treason—plotting against the king. Coke argued the case in court and got the decision he wanted: guilty. Raleigh was taken away to the Tower of London. There, for 12 long years between damp stone walls, this great man dreamed and read and wrote about the adventurous world outside.

Raleigh's old colony of Virginia now had a capital, Jamestown.<sup>1</sup> The Virginian tobacco plantations were worked in the same way as the old medieval manor farms in England, with serfs. The serfs were imported. They were criminals from English prisons, and negro slaves.

A new class of colonists soon went to settle on American shores, however. They were Puritans searching for religious and political liberty. Today we would call them refugees.

At first the Puritans had hoped much from James I. At a conference or meeting held at Hampton Court, a decision was made to prepare a new English Bible.<sup>2</sup> But the Hampton Court conference refused Puritan demands for church reform. Then, shortly afterwards, about 300 Puritan clergymen were thrown out of their parishes. For the first time a Puritan group appeared which was outside the Church of England.

The king and his government seemed to be favouring the Roman Catholics. The Catholics, who now formed only 1 in 20 of the population, began to gain strength. A small group of papists thought they would take power for themselves. They persuaded a soldier named Guy Fawkes to set fire to some barrels of gunpowder hidden in a room

<sup>1</sup> The voyage to Virginia was full of dangers. Details of a ship-wreck on the island of Bermuda can be found in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

<sup>2</sup> The result was a book, the 'Authorized Version', which is still used today. Its rich language was popular then too. It offered much to poets such as John Donne, George Herbert, George Wither and, later, Milton.

This 'King James's Bible' became one of the cheapest books from which children could learn to read. It shaped the Puritan religion so that Puritans became 'a people of the Bible' in much the same way as Muslims were 'a people of the Koran'.



beneath the House of Lords. The date chosen was 5 November, when James and his ministers would be gathered together for the opening of a new parliament.

The government discovered the plot just in time. Guy Fawkes and most of the plotters were arrested. A great wave of fear swept across the nation. Thousands of ordinary Englishmen felt that every Catholic must be a traitor. The 'Gunpowder Plot', as it was called, was added in peoples' minds to their fears of the Inquisition. This fear of Catholics continued, among uneducated people in England, until the twentieth century.

Catholics on the right, Puritans on the left; and now James lost control of the Protestant gentry in the House of Commons. The final break came on the question of the king's 'divine right' to obtain extra import duties. James angrily dissolved Parliament and tried to rule without it.

This hasty and unwise king was behaving like a frightened school-master who sees first one part of his class, and then another, turning against him. When Salisbury died, the best of James's ministers was Sir Francis Bacon, the new attorney-general. Bacon believed in the rule of law, with judges 'like lions under the throne' (rather like the frightened master who keeps a cane under his desk).

But Sir Edward Coke, now Chief Justice, wanted to bring the lions out against their master. He said that the common law should be raised to a position from which judges could decide quarrels between king and parliament. In other words, the common law—as strengthened by Magna Carta and handed down from medieval times—was greater than king, parliament and statute law all put together.

It was an interesting idea, and it was also a reasonable one. There was no written constitution to prevent it;<sup>1</sup> and common law was the law of free men. It protected property and the right to make more wealth. These were the things that mattered most to the gentry in the House of Commons.

When Coke was dismissed by the king (who acted on Bacon's advice), he soon found support for his views in the Commons. He became leader of the opposition to the king's government and remained for many years a thorn in the government's flesh.

<sup>1</sup> There is still no written constitution to govern the laws of England, even today.



Coke's rival, Sir Francis Bacon, did not last much longer. He was made Baron Verulam, and then Viscount St Albans, but he was not a well-liked man. As lord chancellor he was accused of accepting bribes and was forced to retire from active life.

It was a sad fate for a man with so many good qualities. Lonely and disappointed, Bacon spent his last years in literary work. When he died, he left writings on education, science, religion, philosophy and politics—a wonderful out-pouring from a careful, well-schooled, late Renaissance mind.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Walter Raleigh was also near the end. While in the Tower he wrote a history of the world which became a best-seller. Then, suddenly, he was freed from the old walls and allowed to go out on exploration again, to search for his El Dorado: Guyana, the land of gold. He found no gold, and (killed some Spaniards in a fight. This daring and dangerous man then returned to London, and met his death there. He was executed, at the request of the Spanish ambassador, on the old charge of treason.

Raleigh had been a comfort to the extreme Protestants. His execution, settled as a favour to Spain, made many Puritans fear for their own future.

The Pilgrim Fathers in the ship *Mayflower* were the first to escape from the powers of church and state. Their 'pilgrimage' was the search for a freer and happier life in the pure air of America. They settled in Massachusetts; and within the next twenty years about 20,000 other Puritans also made the dangerous Atlantic voyage. They sailed in small groups, carrying seeds for planting, tools for building, and bibles and prayer-books for worship. The area which they colonized was called New England.

Meanwhile other colonists had settled in the West Indies. There they planted sugar. Although the law said that all land occupied by Englishmen belonged to the crown, often the crown sold charters and patents allowing companies in various parts of the world the right to develop the land and market its produce.<sup>2</sup>

These charters and patents worked in much the same way as the monopolies which had been attacked by various parliaments since

<sup>1</sup> Some people believe that Bacon was also the real author of Shakespeare's plays.

<sup>2</sup> 'Trade follows the flag' is a common English saying, but in many British colonies the flag followed trade.



Elizabeth's time. The trouble was that the winners took all. A courtier whose support King James bought with monopolies was able to exclude all other business-men from any share in that particular trade or industry.

It was the same with the chartered companies. They could fix wages and prices, and reduce quality, without fear of competition. In one year of James's reign, the East India Company made a profit of 500 per cent.

The greatest seller of monopolies was James's new favourite and chief minister, George Villiers, earl of Buckingham. He sold titles and positions in court and government also, to his family, relations and friends.

Buckingham was a beautiful young man, loved both by the king and by the king's son, Prince Charles. He was quickly made a duke, and became the most powerful man in the country.

In fact, as James I became stupid with age, the country fell into the power of these two noblemen: Charles and Buckingham. It was a sad fate. Charles was proud and unbending; he was an even firmer believer in 'divine right' than James had been. And Buckingham supported him eagerly.

James Stuart died (some people thought from poison), and Charles came to the throne with Buckingham at his right hand.

The solid squires in Parliament viewed them both with deep suspicion.

### *The struggle of Parliament*

England now entered the Thirty Years' War between Protestants and Catholics in Europe. Charles's sister was married to one of the German Protestant leaders. Parliament was demanding war with Catholic Spain. But Charles himself was married to a princess, Henrietta Maria from France, who was a Catholic.

Buckingham led an army to La Rochelle to relieve the Huguenots, the Puritans of France, who were being attacked by French government forces. He failed, and arrived back in England with a crowd of soldiers who ran wild and caused terror among the people in the harbour of Portsmouth and the surrounding countryside. The government forced the local cottagers to provide room for them.

War with both France and Spain caused the government to ask



Parliament for more money, but Parliament was unwilling to raise taxes without something in exchange. It wanted more action against the Roman Catholics, more freedom for Puritans, and the impeachment—trial by Parliament—of Buckingham.

The government therefore borrowed money for the war. People who refused to lend, Puritans among them, were put into prison. And when the prisoners asked for a lawful trial it was kept from them by command of the king. The form of government was developing into what today is called martial law.

The English do not like military rule. Parliament made an official list of complaints, called the Petition of Right, which was presented to the king. It referred to Magna Carta and asked for the people's rights and liberties to be confirmed. It asked that the king's ministers and officers, such as the lord lieutenant and J.P.s, should act only under the common law and Acts of Parliament.

There was cause for fear. Without the right of trial by jury, without public approval of new laws, without power to change the government, the citizens of a country cannot be free. The main reason for the trouble, people thought, was the influence of Buckingham over the king.

A paper was nailed to a post in a London street: "Who rules the kingdom? The King. Who rules the King? The Duke. Who rules the Duke? The Devil"

A young naval officer named John Felton thought the same. One day in Portsmouth, seeing Buckingham ready to go on ship for a new attack on La Rochelle, he ran up and struck him with a knife.

Charles was deeply saddened by the death of his friend. Always Charles had been a closed-in, secretive, distrustful young man. Now his feelings against other men hardened even more.

Parliament had been purposely keeping him short of money so that he needed to summon it often. Every time Parliament met it went a little further towards declaring its independence. Secretly its power was growing, although it was not yet strong enough to stand up openly to the king's rule.

Charles's third parliament now complained against 'unlawful' customs duties which the government was trying to collect. Charles commanded the speaker of the Commons to leave the House and thus end the meeting. But two members held the speaker down in his



chair, while the king's officers outside beat against the locked doors.

After this violent scene, which was the most open sign yet from the rebellious M.P.s, Charles decided that he must try to rule without Parliament. He did so for the next 11 years.

How did he manage to find the necessary money and support? First, peace was made with France and Spain. Second, several of the parliamentary leaders were persuaded to join the government.

Chief among these was Sir Thomas Wentworth, who became president of the Council of the North. Wentworth at York used the Star Chamber court to break down the resistance of the northern gentry. After that he was sent to govern Ireland for the king, and later was made Earl of Strafford and became the king's chief adviser.

The parliamentarians called Strafford a 'turn-coat', someone who has changed sides. But one of the king's other ministers was even more unpopular. This was William Laud, the archbishop of Canterbury.

Laud was a hot, angry little man whose loyalty to the Anglican church was as firm as the king's. Nevertheless, when the queen, Henrietta Maria, caused the Catholics to become strong again at court, Laud also was blamed for it.

He made things worse by punishing Protestant critics of the state church and by trying to force an Anglican prayer-book on Presbyterian Scotland. The Puritans compared his rule in Britain with the evils of Jesuit rule in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

And it was not only the government's religious policy that caused discontent. Charles's financial policy was equally strict. Money was needed to balance the lack of parliamentary taxes. It was collected by means of forced loans (which were against the Petition of Right), by the sale of more monopolies, and by more customs duties and feudal fees. Also there was 'ship money'—a direct tax intended to pay for the royal navy.

John Hampden, a squire of Buckinghamshire, refused to pay this ship money. His case was heard in the Court of the Exchequer. The judges there were divided, but 7 out of 12 said that the tax was lawful because it was demanded by the king at a time of national danger. And who was to decide what was 'a time of national danger'? The king.

<sup>1</sup> John Milton, in his poem 'Lycidas', compared the Puritan, 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed', with the Roman Catholic, 'the grim wolf with privy paw, daily devours apace (eats everything up), and nothing said'.



This judgment, one young lawyer said, 'left no man anything which he might call his own'.

The parliamentarians agreed. Some were soon writing letters to rebels among the Scots. These rebels, the Scottish 'covenanters', had already forced the king to allow them to control their own affairs. The extreme parliamentarians, Puritans among them, hoped that things in England would go the same way.

At last a parliament was summoned—the 'Short Parliament'—to vote money for an army to go into Scotland. Strafford was called back from Ireland. There he had forced the Irish opposition into obedience to the king. This daring man thought that the M.P.s in London could be forced too. But within three weeks the Commons were dissolved again, with no money voted, several leaders under arrest, and tempers worse than before.

Dissatisfaction was becoming widespread. Outwardly the country had lain at peace during the 11 years of the king's 'personal' rule. However, hungry shapes lay hiding in the shadows—the restless energy of people wanting to take affairs into their own hands.

Outwardly the country appeared much the same as in Tudor times. The people still earned their living in the same ways. Their fishing boats lay in little stone-walled harbours or were pulled up on a stony beach. Their sheep dotted the slopes behind the cliff and spread inland wherever the grass was green and short. Windmills and watermills ground their corn, and horses and carts took it to market. In the forests there were charcoal-burners' huts. Charcoal was made by collecting wood into heaps, covering it with earth, and burning it slowly. It was used widely in the production of iron and the manufacture of glass.

Mining and manufacturing had increased. So also had trade and business generally. A hundred years earlier the best way of increasing wealth had been to put money into land. Now, however, land was scarce. Few country gentlemen wished to sell, because their estates gave much profit. Also, estates were used for pleasures such as hunting and had become marks of their owners' importance in society.

Therefore money was put increasingly into industry and commerce. Squires became manufacturers and suppliers of services—such as banking—on a large scale. Even yeomen entered business as shopkeepers, cloth-makers, mechanics, or carriers providing cart-services from town to town.



But 11 years of the king's personal rule had meant an increase in monopolies and in other controls on manufacturing and trade. The business-men of London's City agreed with the parliamentarians that Whitehall courtiers had an unfairly large share in the country's economic growth. Both industry and commerce should, they thought, be free from government interference. It was the economic system as much as religious circumstances that drove the yeomen of England across the seas, with axes, spades and ploughs, to cultivate the New World. So also it was the economic system that persuaded merchant-gentlemen to put their money into companies trading in areas which would become a future part of Britain's empire.

John Hampden was a share-holder in one of these overseas companies. Another share-holder was a Devonshire squire named John Pym. Both men were extreme Protestants and both were M.P.s. Both were strongly opposed to the king's method of governing.

Pym was a man with a clear view and the gift of organization. He was the leader of all the parliamentarians. He wanted to destroy the king's ministers and reduce the king's power.

His opportunity came when the Scottish covenanters again rebelled. A Scottish army entered England, and Charles was forced to summon Parliament again.

The 'Long Parliament', as it was called later, is the best remembered parliament in England. It sat for nearly 20 years and altered for a time the whole course of English history.

One of its first actions was to pass a Bill condemning the hated minister Strafford to death without a proper trial. Charles could not save Strafford, because an angry crowd surrounded the royal palace at Whitehall. Charles feared for the safety of his queen, Henrietta Maria, and their five children. So he signed the order, and Strafford was led out to execution.

Archbishop Laud was also impeached. From his window in the Tower he saw Strafford go to the block. And 5 years later he too was led to meet the executioner's axe.

The Commons had tasted the first sweet fruits of power, and now there was no way for the king to stop them. With the London crowds round his palace gates, he was forced to sign a Bill which prevented him from dissolving Parliament without the Commons' own permission.



Charles I had become a political prisoner in his own country. The governance of public life in England now lay, suddenly but completely, in the hands of the parliamentary rebels. The law courts, the local assizes, the parish councils and the poor law officials were all controlled by the gentry. All of them now looked to Parliament rather than to the king.

Pym, Hampden and the rest of the rebel M.P.s were not blood-thirsty revolutionaries. They were country squires and city merchants enjoying comfort in rich manor and town houses. They farmed and hunted and ate well, and they held responsible positions as magistrates and justices of the peace.

On the king's side there were the bishops and all who supported the existing organization of the Anglican church. There were also the courtiers, royalist noblemen and knights, who would have defended kings far worse than Charles for the sake of loyalty to the crown. 'Fear God,' the Bible said, but it continued: 'Honour the king.' There were thousands of ordinary people too, especially countrymen in villages far away from London, to whom the king almost was God.

Pym knew he must strengthen Parliament's power. The Star Chamber court was brought to an end. The power of the Privy Council was reduced. Then a 'Grand Remonstrance', a kind of second Petition of Right, was made. This first asked the king to reduce the power of the bishops and to appoint to the government only ministers approved by Parliament. The Grand Remonstrance then listed the evils of government since the beginning of the reign. Its aim was to destroy all public faith in Charles as king.

After that there was a Bill to take control of the militia—including the London train-bands—out of the king's hands. Then news of a Bill to impeach the queen.

This was too much for Charles. Accompanied by 300-400 royal swordsmen, he rode to the House of Commons to arrest Pym, Hampden and three other M.P.s. But these five members, warned of his coming, had escaped by boat down the Thames.

A king had never dared to enter the House before. When Charles asked where the missing members were, the speaker told him: 'I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, except as this House shall direct me.'



Charles looked along the crowded seats in silence. 'I see,' he said at last: 'The birds have flown.'

In the afternoon Charles drove in his coach to the City to arrest the five members who were hiding there. It was cold in the streets and the shops were closed. Few of the people who stood to watch him pass cried 'God save the King!' The Lord Mayor received him at dinner and the sheriffs were polite; but the five members were not produced. Charles knew then, as he drove home in the dark through angry crowds, that by his own act—by his personal invasion of Parliament—he had lost control of London's City.

In fact he had lost the whole of London and the south-east of the country. He must now gain strength to win them back. He sent the queen to Europe to look for soldiers—mercenaries—and money. Then he moved north from Hampton Court, to set up court and capital at York. He took with him his eldest son, Charles, Prince of Wales.

Parliament meanwhile gained control of the train-bands and prepared for civil war.

### *The Civil War*

'The Great Rebellion' of the English parliament against the crown has been seen from many view-points. Some people see it merely as part of the struggle of democracy against one-party government. Others see it as a religious war: Puritans and Presbyterians against Anglo-Catholics. It has also been described as the rebellion of a middle class against a noble class, as a struggle between town and country interests, and as a revolt of 'progressives' against the settled state.

It was a mixture of all of these things. It cut across society in a very confusing way. Even families were split, when brother fought against brother, and son fought against father. Friend fought against friend. Some people even, as the war went on, found themselves changing sides.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of sides was, for many educated people, a terrible problem. Some, bound purely by feelings of chivalry, stayed with the king.<sup>2</sup> Others, drawn by reason or religion or self-interest towards

<sup>1</sup> For example, the poets Edmund Waller and Abraham Cowley.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Cavalier' poets Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace and Robert Herrick supported the royalist cause. So did the mainly religious poets Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan, and also the dramatic poet, James Shirley.



Parliament, could only stand against him.<sup>1</sup> About 80 peers from the House of Lords supported the king; but 30 other peers opposed this royalist party. In the House of Commons, about 170 members out of 470 were royalist at first, although later this number was much reduced.

The two sides became known by the names 'Cavalier' and 'Roundhead'.

The Roundheads were at first the apprentices whose shaven heads had been seen leading riots in the London streets. Then the name was extended to the short-haired Puritan soldiers in the parliamentary army.

Many of the Roundhead gentry dressed to show their opposition to the rich fashions of the court. They wore stiff black hats, tight white collars, dark coats and leggings of plain cloth, with black shoes.

The Cavaliers, the king's men, were much more colourful and gay. They wore large feathers or plumes in their soft wide hats. Their hair was shoulder-length and they grew pointed beards and flowing moustaches. They enjoyed wearing fine lace collars, silk shirts, and coloured doublets like the Elizabethans. They wore soft leather gloves and wide-topped boots. Their name, Cavalier, came from the Spanish 'caballero' or soldier. The Puritans liked to compare the Cavaliers with the cruel soldiers of Catholic Spain.

A good Cavalier was a good swordsman. His sword was thin and straight, with a sharp point. He practised 'fencing' with it—that is, skill in attack and defence. Duelling with swords had taken the place of medieval jousting as the way of testing knights and gentlemen for war. Private quarrels also were settled by means of the duel with swords.

The sword and the pistol were the weapons of a gentleman. The common foot-soldiers, the infantry, were given pikes and muskets. Although there were good horsemen on both sides, riding in a cavalry charge was the special delight of the Cavalier. The most daring cavalry commander was the king's nephew, Prince Rupert. At the beginning of the war there was no Roundhead commander able to defeat him.

Both the Roundhead and the Cavalier armies were, in that first

<sup>1</sup> George Wither, for example, who became a general in the parliamentary army. The much greater poet John Milton (and later John Milton's secretary, Andrew Marvell) also worked for the Puritan cause.



summer of the war, only poorly armed and poorly tested. They were also badly led. Soldiers for each side were gathered together by local gentry who had no knowledge of war. Peaceful squires, gathering their tenants around them, suddenly found themselves as colonels of regiments. Any fighting they did that summer was almost by accident. A small group of horsemen, riding along a rough country road, might suddenly meet an equally small enemy group, in a village or by a wood or at a river crossing. After a short, frightened struggle, and after a few men had fallen bleeding to the ground, both sides would hastily retire.

Most of the quiet hills and woods of England remained undisturbed. There was less fighting than marching. On most occasions the war was governed by gentlemen's rules, with little cruelty on either side. The Roundhead soldiers were told that they were fighting, not against the king, but rather to rescue the king from his wicked advisers.

At the end of the summer the king moved west for support from the midlands and the Welsh marches. Then, with the harvest gathered in, he was ready to advance towards the south-east and London. He had collected 13,000 horsemen, pikemen and musketeers.

They met the main parliamentary army at Edgehill in Warwickshire. It is a lovely place, with green fields spreading away towards the river Avon. Prince Rupert charged with the royalist cavalry and scattered the Roundhead horsemen. But the rest of the enemy's army advanced and nearly captured the king, before Rupert could return to save him. The result was even, with 5,000 men from both sides fallen dead and wounded on the field.

The Cavaliers now continued their advance towards London. They reached the surrounding villages but were met there by the London train-bands in great numbers. Charles decided to retire, and set up his capital at Oxford.

It was winter. The winds blew and the snow came down. In these months of bitter cold there was time to consider the situation and make plans for the spring.

The war continued for 7 years, and during that time there were many changes in the strengths of both sides. Generally, much of the north and west of the country was for the king, while the rest was for Parliament. But there was scattered fighting in many places, because the country gentlemen were much divided. Royalist squires discovered that neighbours on the right and left of their estates had chosen to join



Parliament. Roundhead squires discovered that they must resist the power of royalist lords lieutenant.

Many town and city councils were divided among themselves. Sometimes the aldermen changed sides. Generally the industrial towns and ports—Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Hull, Portsmouth and Plymouth—were Protestant and for Parliament. On the other hand, cities with bishops and cathedrals—Carlisle, Chester, Shrewsbury, Worcester, York—were generally for the king. The university at Oxford was for the king, while Cambridge was for Parliament.

Most ordinary people had no part in the war, however. They merely watched, sad and frightened, as passing armies trod down their corn, scattered the sheep, drove away the cattle, wrecked the shops and the public buildings and the churches, and ruined the roads.

When the second spring came, little groups of royalist horsemen went clattering noisily out of Oxford to raid the countryside. In one violent fight with Rupert's cavalry, the great John Hampden received a wound from which he later died.

That same year John Pym also died. He had been ill and was overcome by worry and by work.

The royalists, on the other hand, were strengthened. Henrietta Maria came back from Europe with weapons and a few officers with experience of military affairs. Most of the north was made safe for the king, and there were successes in the west as well.

But deep in the heart of East Anglia, that low and marshy area between Hull and London, a new spirit was moving among the Puritans. A rough, tough country squire named Oliver Cromwell, a large man with heavy bones and a heavy face, had filled his tenants with the fear of God. Cromwell was an angry man with one idea above all others: Roundhead victory, whatever the cost.

As a countryman, Cromwell knew men and he knew horses. He brought the two together for war in a way not known in England before. As colonel of a cavalry regiment, he taught them strictly. Prince Rupert's cavalry sometimes charged too far from the centre of battle when hunting the enemy. Cromwell's 'ironsides', as his armoured horsemen were called, seldom made that mistake.

Cromwell's powers of organization took him high in the parliamentary army. He became a general. His name became well known in the armies of both sides.



In the third year of the war, Oliver Cromwell's ironsides gave the Cavaliers the worst shock yet. The royalist army was in camp on Marston Moor near York, with the Roundhead army not far away. It was late evening, and Prince Rupert thought that nothing could happen until the next day. He allowed his men to rest, but suddenly a group of several hundred heavily armoured horsemen appeared, coming at them fast. It was Cromwell with his ironsides.

The ironsides swept down on Rupert's cavalry and scattered it completely. 'We beat all the Prince's horse,' Cromwell wrote that night from a farmhouse in the ruined fields. 'God made them as stubble (corn-stalks) to our swords.'

The royalist infantry fought on till midnight. Thousands were cut down, until a parliamentary general pushed his own men away. 'Put up your pikes,' he cried, 'and spare your countrymen.'

The main result of Marston Moor was that the king lost the north. The gates of York were opened to the Roundheads, and the year finished with the Cavaliers forced back upon the west.

In the following year, the Cavaliers suffered an equally terrible defeat at Naseby in the midlands. The opposing armies stood on two low hills, facing each other across a shallow grassy valley. The Cavaliers, their brightly coloured flags proud in the morning air, were ready for glory. The Roundheads, well controlled by their generals, put their trust for victory in God, the Bible and the sword.

The Roundheads now were no longer militia, but a regular army—a 'New Model army' formed according to Cromwell's ideas. Cromwell had told Parliament that he wanted properly qualified officers, yeomen if necessary rather than 'gentlemen', leading properly paid men. The back-bone of the New Model army was Cromwell's own ironsides.

This time, at Naseby, Rupert charged first. He drove the enemy opposite him far from the battle—so far that he himself was unable to return to help the king. Cromwell, meanwhile, kept tight control of his own cavalry. Slowly the ironsides fought their way into the centre of the royalist infantry. Charles, his army broken, was forced to escape the best way possible.

The royalists lost not only a battle at Naseby, but the whole war. Fighting continued for about a year in various parts of the country, with local struggles for castles, towns and manor-houses, but the danger to the king was increasing. The queen and the 16-year-old



Prince Charles had escaped to France. Prince Rupert joined them there in an effort to obtain more soldiers and money for the royal cause.

The king now put himself into the hands of the Scots, who had sent an army to England to assist the Roundhead cause. But he was not safe there. After a few months the Scots gave him to the English parliament.

Charles now hoped to open a political split which had appeared between the parliamentary leaders. Cromwell, supported by the army, seemed to be working towards a society open to all forms of the Protestant religion: Puritan, Presbyterian, Baptist, Quaker and others. On the other hand, the majority of members in the Long Parliament, especially the Presbyterians among them, wanted a regular church to control all religious life.

The argument was not only religious but political too, because it was about democracy. If, as several of the religious groups believed, God was present equally in all men, it followed that all men were equally perfect. Therefore they should all be equal in society. Already common yeomen had proved that they could become good officers in the army. One group of politicians, called 'the Levellers', wanted a parliament elected not only by property-owners forming about one-tenth of the population, but by all 'free' people. That was also the desire of much of the army.

The squires of the Long Parliament were worried and frightened. The Levellers' aim, they thought, was 'to raise the servant against the master, the tenant against the land-lord, the buyer against the seller, the borrower against the lender, the poor against the rich'. Many Presbyterian M.P.s saw the army as a danger to both church and state.

The army had got the king away from Parliament's control and was holding him at Hampton Court. Now, while this argument was continuing, Charles escaped.

He went south, to the Isle of Wight. There, working from Carisbrooke Castle, he reached an agreement with the Scots. In the seventh summer of the war the New Model army faced a Scottish invasion together with royalist-presbyterian alliances in England.

It beat them all, and Cromwell became the most powerful person in England. His main enemies were now the Presbyterians in the Long Parliament. They had worked for the return of the king. The method with which he dealt with them is called 'Pride's Purge'. Colonel Pride,



one of his officers, was sent with musketeers to the House of Commons. There they arrested about 50 Presbyterian members and sent home many more. Today we should call it a military coup. All that remained at Westminster was 'the rump', fewer than 100 members, who became known as the Rump Parliament.

Cromwell decided that the king must be killed. He knew however that, for the eyes of the nation and the world, it must appear to be a 'lawful' death. Charles Stuart must be condemned as a traitor who had fought a war against his own parliament and people. The work of the Rump Parliament was to appoint a court which would judge him guilty.

So King Charles I was brought back to London. He may have been guilty of many stupid actions, but he had always acted in a royal manner, as a king. Now his only thought was a royal one. It was to keep the way open for his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, to become king one day. A king could not be guilty of treason, Charles said. He would not regard the court as a lawful one.

It made no difference. He was condemned. He stood before them on a cold day in winter, a slight figure, his face thin and worn, his hair touched with grey. He stood against an army that had destroyed parliamentary government and was about to destroy him. His courage was high. He told them it was they who were outside the law now.

Then he prepared himself for death. He was executed in front of his own palace at Whitehall. He died with words which reached out over the lines of soldiers, to the gentry who had opposed him but were now under military rule: 'Truly I desire their liberty and freedom . . . and if I had given way to having all laws changed according to the power of the sword, I need never have suffered here. And so I die—the martyr of the people.'

His words were greeted by silence, and the axe then fell.

### *The Commonwealth and the Republic*

The war had made little difference to life in the countryside. Both parties, Cavalier and Roundhead, had known that they could not ruin it without ruining themselves. Some damage was done, as we have seen. Groups of soldiers had appeared and stolen cattle, sheep and horses; but most villages were not affected in this way. The generals on both sides had tried hard to spare hedges, young corn, and fruit



trees. Without harvests and markets, no taxes could be paid; and without taxes neither side could have fought the war.

The people had been much protected by their local councils. The J.P.s too had generally made sure that order and justice were preserved. They kept farming and the cottage industries safe throughout the war. They found ways of meeting fire, flood, poverty and disease. They checked the spread of riot, violence and crime.

The army now was the real master of England. It governed through a Council of State which included 30 members from the Rump Parliament. The House of Lords was dissolved as 'useless and dangerous'. England was named 'a Commonwealth or Free State'.

There were no real democratic reforms, however. When the Levellers made trouble in the streets and in the army camps, they were quickly arrested. Cromwell and his officers had arrived at the opinion that the middle class were the natural rulers of the state. There should be no vote for wage-labourers and other poor people who owned no part of the nation's wealth. The 'free' people in the 'free' state would remain those with property in it.

So life in the country went on in much the same way as before. In winter the trees were without their leaves and the land lay grey and white. In summer all was fresh green again. Cottagers went out at sunrise to milk the cows, plough their fields, plant the seed, make tools, mend fences, repair roofs and walls, or gather the harvest in. Their women cooked and cleaned and sewed and weaved, fed the chicken, ground the corn, made the ale or beer, and helped with the milking and the harvest. Families journeyed once a month or more to the town or county fair, and townsmen even more often visited their little country farms.<sup>1</sup>

The habits of people during the Commonwealth changed only in the towns. The theatres were closed, and so were the cock-pits, bear-gardens, and fun-fairs. The Puritans wore plain clothes, drank no strong drink, played no games or sports, seldom laughed, and stayed at home on Sundays. They were God's chosen people. Their speech was the old-fashioned language of the Bible. They gave their children bible names like Ezekiel, Amos, Gideon and Micah. Now they were

<sup>1</sup> The Englishman of the town has never lost his love of the country. Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler* (a person who fishes in rivers etc., for sport), was an example of a business-man using the countryside for pleasure.



the masters, and they persuaded others to behave in the same way as themselves. Their interference with the lives of ordinary people was called 'the rule of the saints', and they were hated for it.

Until now the church courts had been mainly responsible for punishing moral crimes, but now the ordinary courts were managed by the Puritans, the 'saints'. The punishment for adultery, sleeping with another man's wife, was death. The punishment for a woman condemned as a witch was also death; although witch-hunting and witch-torture had been going on since the middle ages.<sup>1</sup> Sundays were even holier than before. Soldiers entered private houses to seize meat prepared for Christmas Day. The use of strong words, swearing, was punished by a money-fine.

If this is freedom, many people said, give us back the days of old King Charles.

The popularity of that opinion was a real danger for Oliver Cromwell. There was danger too from outside. Ireland was held for the young prince whom the royalists called Charles II. Cromwell went there. His army killed thousands of Catholics, cruelly and bloodily, and terrorized the whole population.

The Scots also supported Charles. The young man was tall, dark, active, clever, and prepared to make almost any political promise necessary to gain his English kingdom. The Scots crowned him king at Scone, the royal palace of ancient Scottish kings.

Meanwhile Cromwell had defeated a Scottish army at Dunbar, about 30 miles over the border. Now Charles II led another Scottish army into England. Cromwell followed south with the New Model army and was joined by several thousands of the English militia. This Roundhead army met the Scots at the old royalist city of Worcester. There, in a fiercer battle than any in the civil war, the royalists' hopes seemed to end for ever. They were surrounded and beaten completely. Only Charles and a few of the royalist nobles managed to escape.

Cromwell followed his victory with a man-hunt. He offered a large sum of money—a thousand pounds—for Charles's head. But various Cavalier families, mostly Catholic, hid the king. They hid him in priest-holes and in other secret places in their homes. They clothed

<sup>1</sup> Even 20 years later, Sir Thomas Browne, the (royalist) author of *Religio Medici*, was still claiming to believe in witches. And he was a doctor, a man of science!



him as a servant and hid him in their kitchens, in farm-buildings, and even up in trees.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Charles travelled secretly across England, while Roundhead soldiers broke open Cavalier houses and arrested those suspected of supporting him. At last he got away across the Channel to wait in Europe for the day when he would return.

For the first time in England there was now a regular army. There was also a regular navy, which was soon used to fight a sea-war against England's main rivals in overseas trade: the Dutch. Holland was the home of Charles's sister, who had married the Dutch prince William II of Orange. The merchants in the Rump Parliament thus feared the Dutch both as seamen and as supporters of the royalist cause.

But the Rump Parliament, the tail-end of the Long Parliament which had been summoned 20 years before, was becoming increasingly unpopular. The army in particular could not see that it had any further purpose. Cromwell decided it must go.

On a spring day he copied the action of Charles I. With 30 musketeers behind him he marched to the House of Commons and entered the room where the members were sitting. He saw the 'mace', the ornamental club which was the mark of the Speaker's authority. 'Take it away!' he said. Then the soldiers pushed the members out, and Cromwell locked the doors behind him.

From then on, Cromwell was never able to find a lawful basis for his government. The constitution of England does not provide for a dictator, so Cromwell's power rested on the army. The people of England do not like either dictators or the army in politics.

Cromwell as dictator tried to work with a new parliament, an 'assembly of saints'. This was called the Barebones Parliament, because of the name of one of its Baptist members, Praise-God Barebone, who was a London leather-seller. But it was soon dissolved and Cromwell was given the title of Lord Protector. He was even offered the crown, but refused to accept it. Great Britain must, he said, remain a republic.

Cromwell as Lord Protector was a sensible and reasonable man. He protected the Quakers, who were the least popular of the religious groups. He allowed the Jews to return to England after their absence

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Oak, a common English inn-sign, is in memory of Charles II hiding among the branches of an oak-tree, while Roundhead soldiers rode by underneath.



of 350 years. He always believed privately in the right of people to personal freedom.

His rule was efficient. He reformed the law courts and the universities. He introduced civil marriage outside the church and ordered that all births, deaths and marriages should be properly and officially recorded. He formed an effective civil service, modernized the army, and made the navy the finest in the world. England was now a first-class international power. Its diplomatic service was organized by the secretary to the governing council, John Milton.<sup>1</sup>

Scotland was ruled for Cromwell by one of his generals, George Monck. Another officer, Robert Blake, led the navy to victory not only against the Dutch but against Spain.

Nevertheless, although there was success abroad, at home the idea of republican government was failing. All power was held together in the single person of Oliver Cromwell. When he died, what would happen? Would there be another rebellion, or several coups as each of his generals in turn seized power?

Cromwell saw the danger and named his son Richard to be protector after him. But Richard was not like his father. He was merely a country gentleman, sincere and honest but without the strength to control an army or organize a government.

Oliver died, not yet 60 but an old man, worn out by work. He was buried like a king in Westminster Abbey.

There was trouble almost immediately. The army started quarrelling with Parliament again. The army generals also quarrelled among themselves. Richard Cromwell resigned.

At the same time there was a complete swing in the opinions of many ordinary people in the country. Young people, who had never lived through Charles I's personal rule, were growing up. They, most of all, were tired of the rule of the saints—the praying and the spying and the whispering of tight-lipped Puritans. They were tired of grey clothes and black clothes and solemn faces. They preferred the idea of royalty and wanted the return of Charles Stuart, that tall, lively, gay young man, from across the Channel.

How was the king restored?

George Monck with the army had come back from Scotland to

<sup>1</sup> The language of diplomacy was Latin, still the international language of Europe.



keep the peace at Westminster. Monck was a royalist who had changed sides late in the civil war when offered a general's command by Parliament. He was a sensible man, not extreme in politics, but careful and much interested in good government.

Monck restored the full Rump Parliament. It included the Presbyterian members who had been turned out by Cromwell. That was the first turn of the wheel.

Then a new parliament was summoned. This time the country got the chance to vote according to its new wishes. Anglican and royalist M.P.s were returned to Westminster in great numbers. Most of the Puritans, and even many Presbyterians, lost their parliamentary seats.

Monck was now in complete control of a policy which would restore the Stuarts. He allowed the House of Lords to sit again. Then the Commons passed a statement recognizing that government ought to be 'by King, Lords and Commons'. A week later there was an official declaration saying that Charles II was king.

The wheel had turned full circle. The army had brought back Parliament and now Parliament had brought back the king.

It was a popular decision. The dark-haired young man who had been working for it for many months now crossed from Holland. As he stepped ashore at Dover and passed up the crowded beach and away through the town towards Canterbury and London, 'the shouting and joy expressed by all was past imagination'.<sup>1</sup>

King Charles II, 30 years old, charmed all whom he met. He was determined to please as many people as possible because he knew that the old days of divine right were gone. The Commonwealth and the republic could not be forgotten. The king must now rule within the law and without the power of a regular army. His supplies must be voted by Parliament, and so his policies must be explained to the Commons. Charles II was determined to keep his crown by all means. That meant he must bow, if necessary, even to his father's enemies. The new Charles was a good politician.

### *Restoration England*

Charles II was anxious that there should be no general act of revenge

<sup>1</sup> The *Diary* of Samuel Pepys. This notebook of events tells us much about Restoration England. Pepys was a civil servant responsible for naval affairs. He was on one of the ships that went to Holland to get the king.



against his father's enemies. But unfortunately it was necessary for him to yield to Parliament, which was now full of Cavaliers and even more royalist than he was. There was a general pardon for all except those who had signed the order for Charles I's death.<sup>1</sup> At the command of the new Parliament, Cromwell's body was taken out of Westminster Abbey and hung like a traitor's at Tyburn. And land taken by the Commonwealth government from the crown and the church was now regained. But when the royalist squires asked for the return of estates taken by Puritan gentry, they were told to argue their cases in court.

The clever king was well served by Edward Hyde, his first minister. Hyde, who was made Earl of Clarendon, was a man with experience.<sup>2</sup> Twelve years earlier he had served Charles I, and he had advised the younger Charles in the years after the civil war.

Clarendon was severe only in religion. The bishops were back in the House of Lords and had restored the Anglican church as in the days of Archbishop Laud. The extreme Protestant groups, called 'non-conformists', had a difficult time. Presbyterians, Puritans, Baptists and other nonconformists were kept out of both the church and politics. Many were not even allowed to worship separately; and preaching was forbidden.<sup>3</sup> Quakers especially suffered. Only firm Anglicans were allowed to hold controlling positions in society.

The royalist M.P.s controlled events at Westminster. The courtiers, several of whom were secretly Catholic, held controlling positions in the government at Whitehall. The most important people in local government were the J.P.s or magistrates. In towns there were also the mayors and aldermen, and in the country villages there were the squires and Anglican parsons. In most villages the parson and the squire stood together in keeping the nonconformist out.

The earnest men of the Commonwealth, 'the saints', had much to complain about. The behaviour of the lords and ladies at Whitehall was particularly shocking. It seemed that all the old godly virtues were being swept away. There was card-playing, dice-gaming, swearing,

<sup>1</sup> Even important officials of the Commonwealth such as Milton were pardoned. Milton was allowed to continue with his writing. He even sold copies of the Puritan poem 'Paradise Lost' during the Restoration.

<sup>2</sup> Clarendon, in his time abroad, had written a History of the Rebellion. He is the first modern writer of history in English literature.

<sup>3</sup> John Bunyan, a Baptist, was put into prison for preaching. There he wrote the first part of his book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.



dancing, love-making—all the joys which the ‘saints’ thought they had stopped for ever.

The gentlemen of the Restoration wore wigs, false hair, which flowed down below their shoulders. They delighted in rich coats of many colours, with silver buttons, gay ribbons and bows of extreme size. The ladies appeared in dresses cut to the shape of the body, with low neck-lines and shoulders almost bare. They painted their faces and did everything to follow the fashion. They too wore wigs, with curls and rings, and smiled invitingly from behind their fans. The men wrote pretty poems for them, fought duels in honour of them, and shamelessly made love to them.<sup>1</sup>

The worst of the new men were the ‘fops’ and ‘rakes’. Fops lived foolishly, thinking about nothing except fashion in appearance, dress and manners. Rakes were also fashionable men, but they lived more wildly and immorally, drinking too much, boasting and duelling, and troubling innocent women.

The king himself set a poor moral example. He treated his wife, the Catholic princess Catherine of Braganza, very badly. He had no children by her, but several by other women. The most famous of his mistresses was a common girl named Nell Gwynn, an orange-seller at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

The re-opening of the theatres was another thing which shocked the old Commonwealth men. Women appeared on the stage for the first time. New writers wrote naughty plays for them, with titles such as ‘Ladies in the Fashion’, ‘She Would if She Could’ and ‘An Evening’s Love’.<sup>2</sup>

Two new theatres opened in London, splendid enough for gentlemen to take their wives. The stage with its scenery was set like a picture in a frame, and the audience sat in rows of seats facing it. Nearest the stage was the pit, where the rich young men, fops and rakes among them, gathered in their gay clothes. Furthest away, and built high up, were the galleries where the common people sat. The king with his ladies, and the lords with their ladies, sat in special boxes at the sides.

<sup>1</sup> But courtiers also satirized real love in lines of polished wit. The lively verse of these ‘court poets’—particularly that of Sir Charles Sedley and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester—is still read today.

<sup>2</sup> The best plays of this time are clever, however, and good literature. They are known today by the name Restoration Drama.



All the fashionable world went to the theatre. The actors and actresses became famous, and writers of quality<sup>1</sup> wrote more and better plays for them.

The key to life was enjoyment. People tried hard to forget the strict and solemn society of Puritan London. The new fashions set by the king and his court were quickly copied by the merchant middle class.

High-class social life depended on the owning of property. It was important to own a good house in order to entertain a large number of friends. It was important also to fill the house with the latest furniture. Cherry-wood, walnut, mahogany and rosewood, all took the place of the old heavy oak-wood. The seats and backs of chairs were covered for comfort with tapestry cloth. Ornamental cupboards and dressing-tables appeared in the bedrooms of merchants' wives.

Everyone dreamed of riches. 'The thing which is nearest to the heart of the nation is trade,' Charles said, 'and all that belongs to it.' He knew his people well. The new fashions spread slowly out of London into the manor-houses of the countryside. Carpets from Turkey and Persia, paintings from Holland and Belgium, books in fine bindings, and many kinds of musical instruments, all went into the houses of wealthy squires.

The king and his court led the fashion in everything. Charles supported all the arts,<sup>2</sup> and science too.<sup>3</sup> Possibly he was copying the custom of that much greater king, Louis XIV of France.

London was the centre of amusement and entertainment, including out-of-door sports in Moorfields, close to the City. There were fields near Piccadilly, too; and in St James's Park the king played the ball game called pall-mall. Further west was Hyde Park, used for horse-riding. In Vauxhall Gardens, south of the river, gentlemen walked with their wives on cool summer evenings. They wore clothes in the

<sup>1</sup> For example, the second Duke of Buckingham, the courtiers Sir George Etherege and William Wycherley, and the poets Thomas Shadwell and John Dryden.

<sup>2</sup> He gave money to poor writers such as Samuel Butler, author of 'Hudibras'. Also he gave Dryden the title 'poet laureate'—official poet to the royal court. In England there is still a poet laureate paid to write poems on special national occasions.

<sup>3</sup> He gave a charter to the Royal Society, a club for scientists such as Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle and Edmund Halley.



latest fashion, watched the entertainers and musicians who performed along the paths, and discussed the latest news out from court.

But London, or 'the great wen'—a poisonous lump—as it was called, was a terrible place for poor people. Half a million people lived there, crowded together in misery. There was space only on the river and in the fields and parks. The streets were narrow, noisy and dirty. In hot weather flies settled on the heaps of rubbish. There was the smell of sweat and rotting waste. Ladies and gentlemen went about with handkerchiefs held to their noses.

During winter it was dark and damp and cold. In very cold weather, the open ditches froze in the streets. Thick mist rolled up from the river and thousands of coal fires turned this mist into smoky fog.

The holes and corners of the wooden buildings were full of rats, and it is not surprising that London was once more struck by plague. It was the worst attack since the Black Death three centuries earlier. Shops, theatres and all places of entertainment closed. The courtiers and rich merchants escaped to their country houses. The great mass of poor people could not leave, however. They locked their doors. In dirty wooden rooms, their bodies swelling and covered with sores, about 70,000 of them died.

England was at war with Holland for the second time. It seemed to the nonconformists, who were against the war, that God was striking an evil land. And then, just when the worst months of plague were over, another sign of God's anger appeared. Fire.

The great fire of London began in a baker's house in Pudding Lane, close inside the east wall of the old City. It began on a hot, dry summer's night with an east wind blowing. The wind carried the flames into the centre of the City and they burned there for 4 days and 5 nights. When the burning was finished, a great area lay waste. Nearly 13,000 houses and 90 churches were gone or ruined. The fire left 1 in every 5 people without homes. However, it stopped the plague.

Soon after the fire, Dutch warships came sailing towards London. They entered Chatham harbour, burned 4 ships and captured the largest in the British navy, the *Royal Charles*.

The French had entered the war on the side of the Dutch, and things were going badly for England. Much of the blame fell on the old chief minister, Clarendon. Peace was made, leaving the Dutch colony in America, New Amsterdam, in English hands (it later became New



York). Nevertheless, Clarendon was impeached and was forced to leave the country.

The government now fell into the hands of 5 ministers whose names—Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale—made the word CABAL. A cabal is a small group of politicians working in secret. The kind of government which they formed is known today as 'cabinet' government.

Baron Ashley, who became Earl of Shaftesbury, was the most remarkable of these 5 men. He became the leader of an opposition party which was later joined by Buckingham. The occasion for opposition arose in this way:

Charles II was always eager for an opportunity to free himself from Parliament, to find other ways of obtaining supplies and money. Now the French king, Louis XIV, made an offer. If England would join France in a new alliance against the Dutch, he would give Charles enough money to make parliamentary supplies unnecessary. But Charles must also promise secretly to become a Catholic.

Charles agreed to these conditions, and a secret treaty was made between him and Louis. In this way a third war was started against Holland; but it was against the wishes of Parliament. A war in which England sided with a Catholic nation against a Protestant nation could not be popular with the Parliament men.

Shaftesbury discovered the secret promise and left the government. The opposition which he organized came mainly from Protestant groups. National opinion was again split, as at the beginning of the civil war. There were M.P.s who supported the king and his court, right or wrong. On the other hand there were M.P.s, following Shaftesbury and Buckingham, who claimed to represent 'the country'. They formed the opposition party.

### *Whigs and Tories*

The time came when both parties in Parliament were united about one matter: the war against the Dutch must end. England was gaining nothing from the fighting. The war was merely helping France.

The two Protestant nations, Holland and England, had been rivals in trade for many years. Both were building trading empires overseas. Now England left the war. Holland continued fighting France while



the English began to develop their sea-power, and their colonial properties, undisturbed.

France was Catholic and thus the natural enemy. That was the belief of Shaftesbury and his country party.

Shaftesbury himself began to increase the fear of Catholicism in England. He pointed accusingly at the king's brother, the Duke of York, who had become a firm Catholic and had married a Catholic princess. Because Charles's queen had produced no children, this duke James was next in line for the crown.

Charles, however, by one of his mistresses, had a son who was a Protestant by birth and education. This young man was given the title Duke of Monmouth and claimed to be in line for the crown. Shaftesbury, Buckingham and many members of the country party supported Monmouth's claim.<sup>1</sup>

This was the situation in the seventeenth year of Charles's reign. Most members of Parliament supported Monmouth, while a few members supported the Catholic Duke of York. Then the situation changed. Most members of the court party were delighted when the Duke of York's daughter was married to a Dutch Protestant prince, William III of Orange. Now there were 3 claimants to the crown; and 2 of them were Protestant: Monmouth and William.<sup>2</sup>

There was much political and religious trouble-making. Suddenly news was spread of a 'popish plot' to murder Charles, make his brother James king, and restore Catholicism in England.

The story of this 'plot' was invented by a man named Titus Oates. He told it to a London magistrate who was later found murdered. Although there was no truth in the news about the plot, the violent murder left everyone prepared to believe anything.

For a few days the country went mad with fear and excitement. Citizens at Westminster searched for gunpowder under the floorboards of Parliament. Countrymen hunted for Jesuit priests in manor walls. When Titus Oates repeated his lies in court, crowds invaded Catholic houses and many innocent Catholics were murdered.

All this helped the Protestant 'country' party. Shaftesbury and Buckingham, in their battle against the court party, seemed to have

<sup>1</sup> Buckingham is 'Zimri' in Dryden's poem 'Absalom and Achitophel'. Monmouth is 'Absalom' and Shaftesbury is 'Achitophel'.

<sup>2</sup> See the plan on page 180.



won. A new election returned a House of Commons which was almost entirely against the court party.

One of the first actions of the new parliament was to pass a *habeas corpus* Act to protect Monmouth's supporters. This Act said, as it still says today, that no British citizen should be kept in prison without a trial. It is part of the basis of British freedom from police government.

Although Charles did not resist this democratic law, he was watching the country party carefully, nevertheless. Shaftesbury had become Lord President of the Council, but Charles was able to change his ministers as easily as he changed old clothes. When Shaftesbury tried to push through Parliament a Bill which would keep James from the throne and put Monmouth there instead, Charles suddenly acted. He entered the House of Lords wearing crown and robes, summoned the Commons to him, and declared that Parliament was dissolved.

During that time, Shaftesbury's men had started to use the word 'Tory' as a rude word for the court party. It was an Irish word, meaning Roman Catholic outlaw. The court party, the Tories, had replied by calling members of the country party 'Whigs', a rude Scottish word meaning Presbyterian rebels. These names, Whig and Tory, stayed with the two parties which now began to develop.

The Tory party, which in those early days was still mainly Cavalier, believed that government should be appointed freely by the king.<sup>1</sup> The Whigs, representing mainly Protestant and business interests, believed above everything that government must be controlled by the House of Commons.<sup>2</sup>

There were other differences too. Most Tories wanted to keep the old ways of a society with roots in the countryside. Most Whigs, on the other hand, were prepared to change more with economic development.

The Tory squires were generally poorer than the Whig squires, because most of them were country-born and country-raised while many of the Whigs were merchant-squires. The Tory country-squires had little experience of town life and often their only income was that produced by the land. But agricultural experiments were leading to

<sup>1</sup> Their opinions were expressed by the political writer Thomas Hobbes.

<sup>2</sup> The political writer John Locke worked under Shaftesbury. Locke believed that a government should remain only if trusted by the people. If the government acted against that trust, it should be changed.



changes in farming methods. While the big merchant-squire had both knowledge and money to keep up with these changes, the small country-squire had neither.

The small squire lived close to the earth. He got meat by hunting for it with horses, dogs and guns. Sometimes he got money by methods outside the law. Many with estates near the coast made money out of smuggling. Fishing-boats crept silently in by night under the cliffs of Cornwall, Devon and the other southern counties. They carried French and Spanish wines in barrels, expensive cloths, tea, coffee, and powdered tobacco for snuff. In fashionable society, taking snuff was now more popular than pipe-smoking. The tobacco powder, mixed with spices, was 'snuffed' in through the nose and then sneezed out again.

Many of the Whig families became rich from overseas trade. There were now British possessions at Tangier, Bombay, Madras, Bermuda, Barbados and Jamaica, besides those in America. But overseas trade was a dangerous business, facing great risks. There was competition from Dutch, French, Portuguese and Spanish rivals, together with the risk of raids from pirates such as the terrible Henry Morgan. And in the American colonies there was always danger from Indian raids.

The most profitable business was selling slaves to American and West Indian plantations. The Royal African Company sold negroes at £16 a head. The Gambia Adventurers helped to increase the slave population of some Caribbean islands until there were more slaves than free men. The slaving ships sailed mainly from Bristol and the new port at Liverpool. They took cheap cloth for the West African chiefs, carried the slaves across the Atlantic, and went home with money and cargoes of sugar.

More and more, England's sea-trade was being protected by its navy. The need for seamen was so great that men were 'pressed' into naval service. The method used was the 'press gang'. Gangs or groups of rough men were sent into the streets of the sea-coast and river-side towns. They seized any men they could find there with experience of the sea—Thames watermen, merchant-seamen, fishermen, for example. These 'pressed' men had no choice. They must serve for a whole voyage, while their wives and children were put into 'poor-houses' by officials of the parish.



Poor people lived with many hardships in Restoration England. They were still governed by the Elizabethan poor-laws of a century earlier. There was much crime, especially on the roads and in the towns. The streets were dark at night, and footpads hid in the corners, armed with wooden clubs. A robber on the road was called a highwayman. Often on horses, and carrying pistols and swords, highwaymen stopped travellers' coaches with the much-feared command, 'Stand and deliver!' One highwayman became famous by riding 200 miles up the Great North Road from London to York in less than a day.<sup>1</sup> He showed himself at York to make people think he could not have been in the south at the time of his robbery.

Thieves faced death if they were caught, because people cared much about property. They cared for their dogs and horses too; but human life was valued less than it is today. The punishment for most kinds of robbery was hanging on a gibbet or gallows—a tall wooden pole with an arm on which the person was hung with a rope round his neck until dead. There were many gibbets standing in the towns and countryside of England, and people lived with the idea of death.

Poor people had no political voice in Restoration England. They had no vote, and they did not care whether Whigs or Tories controlled the government. The House of Commons was a house of landlords and businessmen voted into power by other landlords and businessmen, many of whom were paid to vote.

Such men should have been ashamed; but few were even worried that over half the total population of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million were poor people with not enough to eat. A nobleman's income was about £3,000 a year and a merchant's income about £500, while the mass of cottagers and paupers had less than £10 a year.

There was nothing new in this. The social differences had existed for many centuries past. The Commonwealth had done very little to cure them. Although most squires cared for the farmers on their estates, the country yeoman was still as poor as the London apprentice and many yeomen still came into the towns searching for work.

Many towns spread beyond their walls. In London, especially in the old City, the change was great as the newcomers poured in and businesses developed. New work-houses and merchants' houses, made

<sup>1</sup> An even more famous highwayman, Dick Turpin, may have done this ride too. But he lived 50 years later.



of bricks, rose up on the waste-land left by the great fire.<sup>1</sup> The City joined with Whitehall and Westminster, making London the largest capital in the world.

The old narrow streets, which were 'cobbled'—or surfaced with egg-shaped stones—were not changed, however. The coaches and the carriages still passed within an arm's length of citizens' front windows. There was also the noise of tradesmen's carts pulled by donkeys, the long heavy wagons of the carriers, and the public or 'hackney' coaches. Rich people rode more smoothly in 'sedan' chairs, covered against the rain and carried by two men with poles.

Side by side with economic progress there was the political development of the two-party system. The existence of a regular opposition to the party in government was a basic development in the country's progress towards democracy. Although the common people still had no vote, each party must now present its policies in competition with the other.

Even after Charles II had dissolved Parliament, the Whigs continued their policy of getting Monmouth recognized as heir to the throne. But the Tory government, which supported James as heir, prevented them from expressing their opinions openly. Therefore the Whigs planned secret rebellion. Shaftesbury sent Monmouth to gather support in the north.

The young duke was arrested, and Shaftesbury himself soon became a hunted man. He went to Holland, hoping for Dutch support. But after a few weeks there, this remarkable politician died.

The remaining Whig leaders now planned open revolution. Before they could do anything, however, the government received news of a plot to murder both Charles and James. The plan was to drag the two brothers from their coach as it passed a farm called the Rye House on its way back to London from the Newmarket horse-races.

The government acted fast to stop the Rye House plot. Several Whig leaders were arrested, declared guilty of treason, and condemned to death.

That almost finished the Whig party. When Charles II died from a natural illness 2 years later, James came to the throne on a tide of Tory

<sup>1</sup> One of the planners of the new London was a gentleman named Sir Christopher Wren. He built over 50 new churches, together with St Paul's Cathedral as it stands today.



popularity; and the first parliament of his reign was almost entirely Tory. Tory sheriffs ruled the towns and all the countryside. They held England for the new king with a loyalty which was firm and true.

These happy Tories were only slightly worried that the new king, James II, was a Roman Catholic.

### *The Glorious Revolution of the Whigs*

James ought to have left this happy state of affairs alone. But he was a very different man from his easy-living brother Charles. He was unbendingly honest, with strict opinions on matters which he thought were morally important.

James II's main aim was to improve the position of his fellow Catholics. Then, like Bloody Mary Tudor a hundred years earlier, he hoped to lead the whole country back to Rome.

He expected to do all this without much opposition from his Tory parliament; and that shows how little he understood the Tory squires. They would support any Stuart king, but only for as long as he allowed the Anglican church to continue. They would certainly do nothing to assist the few power-hungry Catholics who stood behind James's throne.

Meanwhile the Whigs, who although defeated were not completely broken, had hopes of a different kind. Some of them still supported the Protestant Duke of Monmouth in his claim to the crown. Others looked to the Dutch Protestant prince, William III of Orange, to whom the king's daughter Mary was married. This William of Orange had a good claim, because his own mother had been James's elder sister.<sup>1</sup>

Other Whigs were even more extreme. They thought back to the parliamentary Commonwealth and worked towards a new republic.

The chance of the Monmouth Whigs came in the first year of James's reign. The Protestant duke, who had been sent to live abroad, now returned. He landed with a few friends, at a small harbour in the south-west of England, and began a rebellion. About 6,000 countrymen from the farms of Devon and Somerset gathered round his flag as he marched inland. Most of them were poor Puritans, riding cart-horses and armed only with farm-tools and ancient pikes.

Monmouth declared himself king at Taunton and led this odd crowd

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 180.



of angry peasants across marshy moors towards the city of Bristol. The royal army, consisting of hastily gathered militia, marched west to meet him. A battle at night was fought in an open area of land at Sedgemoor. The heavy guns of the royalists soon defeated the rebels in the last big struggle ever fought on English soil. Monmouth escaped from the battle, but later he was captured and executed.<sup>1</sup>

The government's punishment of the rebels and their supporters was terrible. The chief judge, Judge Jeffreys, rode down into the west country and at Taunton held a mass trial. It became known as the 'bloody assize'. Even women were executed. About 200 poor people were condemned to the gallows and 800 more were 'transported'—that is, sold as slaves to plantation-owners in the West Indies.

Judge Jeffreys acted more like a beast than a man. But King James, caring only that a new civil war had been prevented, honoured him and made him Lord Chancellor.

James now built up a regular army in order to strengthen his power, and tried to increase the number of Catholic officers in it and in key government positions. Also he tried to prevent Anglican parsons from preaching against Catholic priests and the growing power of the Catholic church.

In the fourth year of the reign, the archbishop of Canterbury and six Anglican bishops refused to accept a royal declaration which favoured Catholicism. They said that the king's action was not lawful. James arrested them, but the jury at their trial declared them not guilty of supporting rebellion against his authority. They were set free, and there was great popular excitement.

Even some of the Tories had moved close to Whig opinion. They were prepared to accept James only because he had two Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne, who were the children of his first wife. Now, however, James's second wife, Mary of Modena, a Catholic, gave birth to a son.

Everywhere the king's enemies plotted and waited. They were looking towards Holland, the home of James's daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange, who was called 'Dutch William'. He was the key to the situation. His claim to the English throne was good, when coupled with that of his wife Mary. Besides, he was a firm

<sup>1</sup> The young Whig writer Daniel Defoe fought in Monmouth's rebellion. Later he joined William of Orange.



Protestant; he had been defending Holland against Catholic France for many years.

Seven leading Whigs and Tories had sent an invitation to Dutch William. They promised him support for an invasion. He began to gather ships together.

At first he was delayed by strong winds. He had a good chance of success, including the support of six British regiments. Only the weather held him back.

In England, meanwhile, another sort of wind was blowing. It was called a Whig wind, a Protestant wind, the wind of revolution. Whispers had spread that King James was planning a Catholic coup, using French and Irish soldiers and popish priests. Protestant officers in the army and the navy met secretly to decide how to resist it.

Then the autumn weather improved at last, and Dutch William set sail from Holland. His fleet came to land at Torbay in Devon. Memories in the west country of the government's cruelty after Sedgemoor brought many people to his side. He advanced through Somerset into Wiltshire, while his army of 15,000 swelled. The great Whig landlords joined him. The church and the universities welcomed him. Even the king's second daughter, the princess Anne, declared her support for him.

It seemed as though the whole of James's kingdom was falling towards William, like a pack of cards. The army went over to him or melted away, until there were no soldiers remaining between William and London.

James II, who was now left almost alone in his palace at Whitehall, was in despair. He had sent his queen and baby son to France for safety, and soon he tried to follow them. First he burned the writs used for summoning Parliament, in an effort to stop the working of democratic government. Then he threw the Great Seal, which was used for stamping the writs, into the muddy water of the river Thames. Then, having got away from London, he was unluckily captured by some fishermen near the Kent coast, on his way towards crossing the Channel. Lonely and friendless, he was carried back to London.

Proper government had stopped working by the time Dutch William reached the capital. The hated Lord Jeffreys was found, hiding in seaman's clothes, at a town near the mouth of the Thames. He too



was taken back to London, and thrown into the Tower for safety from the angry crowds.

The king was sick in mind and body. William agreed to let him go. On Christmas Day James at last reached France, to join his wife and son and to live under the protection of the French king.

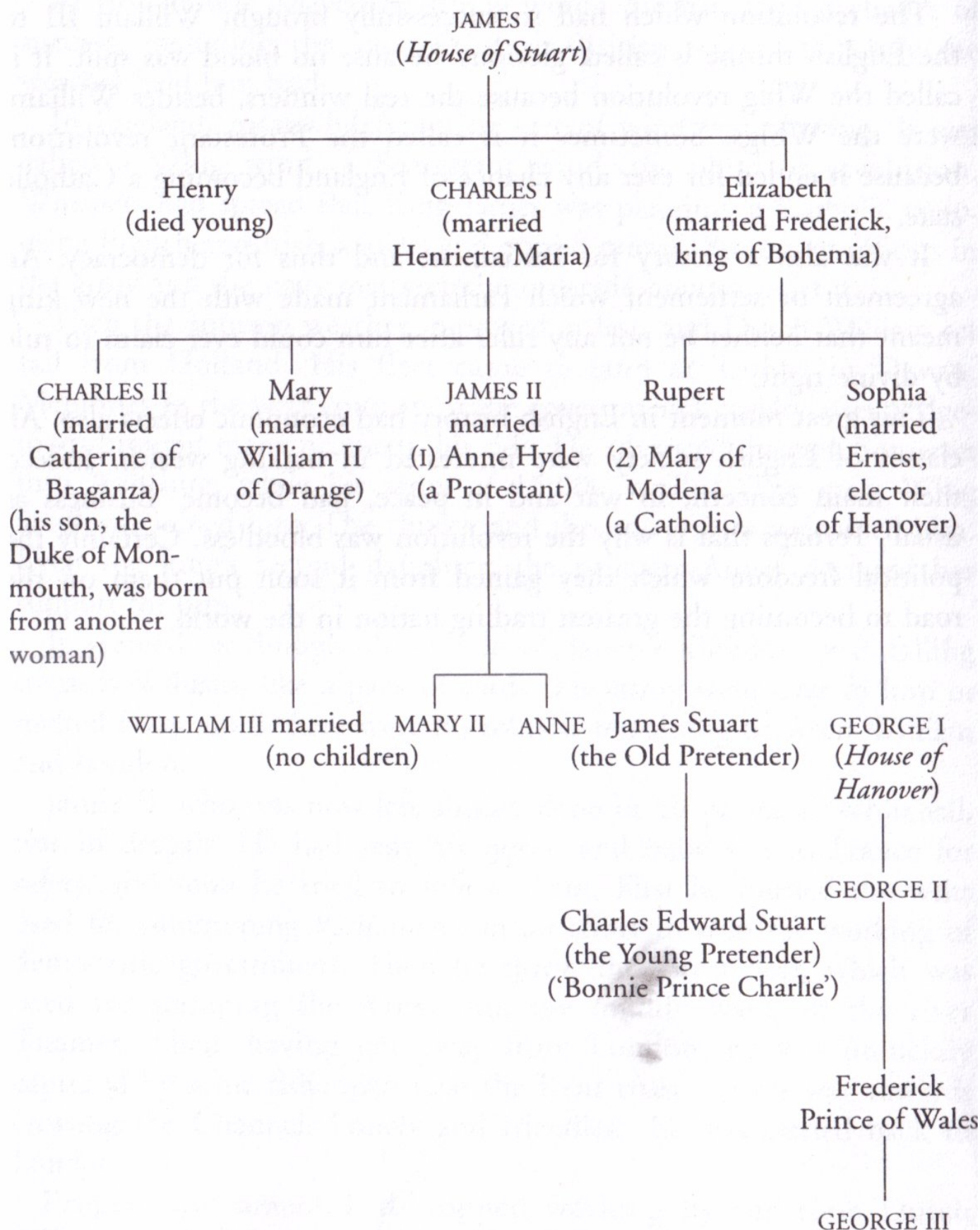
The revolution which had so successfully brought William III to the English throne is called 'glorious' because no blood was spilt. It is called the Whig revolution because the real winners, besides William, were the Whigs. Sometimes it is called the Protestant revolution, because it ended for ever any chance of England becoming a Catholic state.

It was also a victory for Parliament and thus for democracy. An agreement or settlement which Parliament made with the new king meant that neither he nor any ruler after him could ever claim to rule by divine right.

This great moment in English history had economic effects also. All classes of English society were interested in making wealth. Indeed their main concern, in war and in peace, had become 'Business as usual'. Perhaps that is why the revolution was bloodless. Certainly the political freedom which they gained from it soon put them on the road to becoming the greatest trading nation in the world.



# THE STUART LINE AND THE HOUSE OF HANOVER



*Note:* This plan covers chapters 5 and 6.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 5

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
		1603–10		
James I (1603–25)	Rudolf II	Al Mansur	Ieyasu	French at Quebec
		1611–20		
Francis Bacon	Galileo Galilei	Kalonga Masura	Abbas I	Dutch at New York
Edward Coke	Michael Romanov	Bornu empire	Jehangir	<i>Mayflower</i>
		1621–30		
Charles I (1625–49)	Frederick Henry of Orange	Akan states	Dutch in Jakarta	Puritans in America
1st Duke of Buckingham		Changamires	Murad IV	
		1631–40		
Archbishop Laud	Gustavus Adolphus	Dutch at Elmina	British ill Madras	British in West Indies
Earl of Strafford	Richelieu	Swahili traders	Japan closed to Europeans	
		1641–50		
Civil war	Portugal independent	Manikongo Christians	Shah Jehan	Dutch in Brazil
		1651–60		
The Commonwealth	Mazarin	Dutch at Cape Town	Dutch in Ceylon	British take Jamaica
		1661–70		
Charles II (1660–85)	Frederick William	Bambara of Segu	Aurangzeb	British take New York
Earl of Clarendon	Louis XIV		Kang Hsi	
		1671–80		
First cabinet	William III of Orange	Spread of the Masai	Shivaji	Brazil Portuguese
		1681–8		
Whigs and Tories	John Sobieski	Kabaka Juko	Kara Mustafa	2 million Negro slaves in America
James II (1685–8)	Charles II of Spain	Omanis at Zanzibar	Bugis in Selangor	



## *The Settled State*

### *The revolutionary settlement*

When William III arrived in England, he was received as a rescuer and protector rather than as a king. Most of the old power of the crown lay now in the hands of Parliament. The middle-class gentry controlled the lives of the mass of people. The M.P.s made the laws, and the J.P.s made sure they were obeyed.

Dutch William realized that he must accept this state of affairs. He was in the middle of a war against Louis XIV, and he needed England as a second base from which to fight. He must receive the crown on the best conditions that Parliament would give him.

The first condition was that William should share the crown with his English wife Mary, because she was the real heir to the throne. Thus William and Mary became equally king and queen together.<sup>1</sup> Second, as rulers together they were both under the general control of Parliament.

The forms of control were listed in a Bill of Rights and became part of the revolutionary settlement. After the settlement, no English king or government could, for more than a short time, follow policies which did not have Parliament's approval. No king's minister could continue in office without the support of the majority, the greater number of M.P.s. If William III wanted war against France, he must persuade the Whig majority to agree to it.

In the same year as the Bill of Rights, William and Mary signed a parliamentary Act relieving nonconformists from the strict laws brought against them at the time of the Restoration. For nearly 30 years the nonconformists had been kept out of offices in central and local government. The new Act made it no longer necessary for these groups to worship secretly in farm buildings, fields and woods. It allowed them to come out into public view and to take some part in local politics and in trade. Quakers, Presbyterians and others were now able to help

<sup>1</sup> This is the only occasion when Britain has had two equal rulers.



develop the country's wealth. The result, as we shall see in the next chapter, was a great influence on the national economy. William Penn's fast-developing Quaker colony in America, Pennsylvania, was an example of the value of the hard-working nonconformists freely taking part in economic progress.

The new Act did not include Catholics, although even they were soon allowed to worship in peace. Many Catholics were supporters of the old king, James Stuart. James, working from France, tried to threaten the new arrangements. He had active followers both in Scotland, which was the ancient friend of France, and in Ireland, where the population was mainly Catholic.

In Scotland, an army gathered together in rebellion. It defeated an army loyal to William at the battle of Killiecrankie, and the English had difficulty in persuading the Scottish soldiers to go home. The wild country of the highlands was a cruel place. A family named Macdonald, who were slow to obey the new Whig government, was almost completely destroyed by a rival family, named Campbell, in the valley of Glencoe.<sup>1</sup>

The revolutionary settlement was not popular in Catholic Ireland either. Most people there preferred the old king. James Stuart landed in Ireland and quickly took control of all the country except the north-east, which was Protestant. There, in Ulster, William's supporters were called Orangemen. James attacked the Orangemen in Londonderry, and later William felt it necessary to go to Ireland himself to relieve the situation. His army defeated the Catholics at the battle of the river Boyne. James left the battlefield hastily and returned to France.

James's supporters were called Jacobites, 'Jacobus' being the Latin name for James.<sup>2</sup> The Jacobites became strong as time went by, not only in Scotland and Ireland but in Tory politics in England also. Many Tories hoped that James, and afterwards his son, 'James III, the king across the water', would one day be restored.

Meanwhile, Dutch William now felt strong enough, with Whig support, to form his Protestant alliance against France. He was a strong-minded man, with a thin, strict face, a hooked nose and sharp eyes. He spoke seldom, and when he did speak his words were sensible and

<sup>1</sup> This mass murder has never been forgotten in Scotland. There are ballads about it, and it greatly interested the writer Sir Walter Scott.

<sup>2</sup> Latin was the language of the Roman Catholic church.



chosen with care. Through all his life he had one main aim: to save his homeland, Holland, from the armies of Louis XIV.

The French were strongest on land. The English and Dutch were strongest at sea. William was brave. He led the Dutch and English armies himself, although without much success. He was supported by many Anglicans and most nonconformists in England because Louis had made it clear that a French victory would mean the return of James to the English throne.

When Queen Mary died, King William continued alone. She left no children, so it was agreed that her younger sister Anne, although a Stuart, should be the next person to wear the crown. At last even Louis recognized this. He had lost the Belgian city of Namur to William, and soon after that the fighting came to an end.

The war had meant fresh taxes, including a window tax and a land tax. Both were passed by Parliament, although the land tax especially was unpopular with the manor-owning squires.

One of the Whig ministers thought of a new way of getting money for the government: by loan. If the government was lent money on a long-term basis, it could pay interest on the amount received. Several Whig ministers formed a company, the Bank of England, to organize the collection of the loans. The Bank borrowed money from the public at a low rate of interest and lent it to the government at a higher rate. Soon the Bank of England was allowed to make its own paper money, banknotes.

The fact that the middle class had money to lend was a sign of its increasing wealth. Coal and many sorts of metal—iron, tin, lead and copper—were being dug out of the ground in increasing quantities. Many people had become rich while making and selling supplies during William's war. Besides guns and swords, there was a growing demand for such things as tools, nails and articles made of leather. The old monopolies on trade were gradually being removed. More people now had a share in the manufacture and sale of many domestic necessities: hats, clothes, furniture, glass and china, for example. The freedom and peace within the country, brought by the revolutionary settlement, was already having an effect on economic development.

Although provincial towns were growing fast, London remained the country's greatest business centre. It now spread far beyond the City, Westminster and Whitehall. Shops were appearing in the 'West



End'—that is, in Bond Street, Pall Mall and Piccadilly. There was a theatre in Drury Lane and another at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Two more would soon rise up in the Haymarket,<sup>1</sup> and later one at Covent Garden.

The new London reflected the desire of the middle class to live well. Increasingly they wanted to eat, to drink and to clothe themselves like lords. They admired the rich Whig lords, who controlled so much of the country's wealth, and attempted to imitate them in many ways. There is a saying, 'An Englishman dearly loves a lord.' It is one of the reasons why some Englishmen (and Englishwomen) are known as 'snobs'—that is, persons who have too much respect for social position.

The English also respect power and the people who hold it; but they do not like a show of power. They like their leaders to remain life-size, like ordinary men. They do not mind being ruled, but they prefer to be ruled quietly, almost without realizing it.

The Whig lords knew this, and King William soon learnt it. William learnt also that the English do not like foreigners. His ministers respected him but feared him, because he was secret, cold and inward-looking. William III trusted his Dutch friends and favourites more than he trusted the Whigs.

He was always worried about Europe. Now a new threat to Protestantism was growing there. William's old enemy, Louis XIV, was trying to place a Frenchman on the Spanish throne. France and Spain together would be strong enough to force Catholicism on all the rest of Europe. Once again William must try to persuade Englishmen to look outwards over the Channel.

But he was a sick man, near the end of a life which had been too active. He searched round England for a man bold enough to continue his European work. The man whom he chose was an army general, a favourite of the princess Anne. His name was John Churchill, and he was carl of Marlborough.

### *War with France*

Marlborough was a firm Protestant and a good general. He was

<sup>1</sup> One of them was built by the dramatist Sir John Vanbrugh. His plays, and those by Congreve, Farquhar and Cibber, are similar to the plays of the Restoration dramatists. They are generally less artificial, however, and have more depth.



also a smooth and charming diplomat. He liked to be friends with all sides in a quarrel. As a young man he had served the Catholic James II, but he had joined William during the glorious revolution. His wife Sarah was a firm favourite of the princess Anne.

When James died in France, Louis XIV supported the claim of his son, James Stuart,<sup>1</sup> to the English throne. William, meanwhile, had done much to prepare for a new war. He took Marlborough with him to Holland, in a successful effort to form a new 'grand alliance' against France.

Then William himself died, from the shock of a broken collar-bone after falling from a horse. Anne became queen, and people were reminded of the great days of Queen Elizabeth. The drums were sounded against France, as they had once been sounded against Spain. Whigs, Tories, the whole nation, were ready to support the war.

But Anne was not like Elizabeth. In politics she was a simple-minded woman, depending almost entirely on the strong and clever Sarah, Marlborough's wife.

Marlborough was commander of the armies and foreign minister. He and the treasurer, Lord Godolphin, controlled the government for war. Godolphin found the supplies, and Marlborough got them on to the battlefield. In the first year of war, Marlborough was made a duke.

At first the war was fought mainly by German mercenaries, because the English army was not large. The system of the press gang was kept only for the navy. Men cannot run away from ships, but they can from armies, even on the battlefield. For the army it was necessary to take criminals from prison with promises of freedom, and to take paupers from the roads with promises of a small 'bounty', payment for their service. These poor men were clothed in red and blue coats and made to stand in line. They were given muskets with bayonets, straight knives, fixed to them.

These rough men were made to march long distances, too. The war was fought all over Flanders, the low country which lay between Holland and France. On one famous occasion, in the third summer of the war, Marlborough led his men all the way across Europe to the river Danube. There he met his ally, the Austrian commander Prince

<sup>1</sup> 'The Old Pretender'. See the plan on page 180.



Eugene; and at a village called Blenheim they defeated the armies of Bavaria and France.

Blenheim was the most famous battle of the war. It made the English recognize Marlborough as the finest soldier the nation had ever known. They built a palace for him at Woodstock in Oxfordshire, and they called it Blenheim.

Two years after this victory, Marlborough won another at Ramillies near Brussels. Then, two summers later, Marlborough and Eugene together defeated yet another huge French army outside the Belgian town of Oudenarde. In the following year there was one more great victory at the French village of Malplaquet.

These names—Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet—are still remembered in the history of the British army. They caused the English in Queen Anne's time to look at their army with a new pride. The sons of gentlemen entered it to become officers. They took their horses with them, and many were prepared to serve without pay. They wore their own clothes, too—three-cornered stiff hats, long 'full-bottomed' wigs, fine neck-cloths, wide-skirted coats, and knee-length stockings.

There was a pause in the marching and fighting every winter. In late autumn, with the mud deep on the roads, Marlborough's officers returned to England in search of more soldiers. At that time of year, with the harvest gathered in, many men could be persuaded to take 'the queen's shilling' and join one of the many regiments.

Some became 'dragoons', cavalrymen with guns. Others became 'hussars'. They were also cavalry, but more lightly armed for speed. 'Fusiliers' were foot-soldiers, armed with the 'fusil' or musket. And there were the 'grenadiers', who were also infantry but were armed with explosive hand-bombs, 'grenades'.

The 'guards' regiments became especially famous in British history. There were the Life Guards and the Horse Guards forming the queen's household cavalry. The Grenadier Guards and the Coldstream Guards were both infantry regiments, and so also were the Scots Guards. They became part of the British army in the year that Scotland joined with England in full union.

The Act of Union between Scotland and England meant showing two crosses on the British flag. The English cross of St George is red on a white background. The cross of the Scottish national saint, St



Andrew, appears as a corner-to-corner cross, white on a blue background.<sup>1</sup> The new red, white and blue flag was called the Union Jack.

The Act of Union completed the work begun 100 years earlier, when James VI of Scotland had become James I of England. It added a union of parliaments to the union of crowns. This meant that Scottish presbyterian M.P.s could now sit at Westminster, and that meant including English presbyterians in Parliament too.

England gained much from the union. Many Scots moved south, where the climate is kinder, and by hard work and cleverness they quickened the development of English industry and trade. As the years passed, the Scots took a leading part in Great Britain's<sup>2</sup> commercial development overseas. Many people say that the British empire was built really by the Scots!

The union meant that the Scots must accept English plans for the British throne. Although Anne, married to a prince of Denmark, had produced several children, they had all died young. Parliament had passed an Act settling the crown on the Protestant family of Hanover in Germany.<sup>3</sup> This Act of Settlement had been aimed at preventing the return of a Catholic king. Now Scotland must drop support of the Stuarts and accept the Hanoverians too.

It was mainly the Whigs who had planned both the Act of Settlement and the Act of Union. They were the majority in Parliament, even though the war government was a mixture of Whigs and Tories. Today we would call it a 'coalition' government.

Godolphin and Marlborough were really above party politics. They tried hard to make their policies suit both sides. Marlborough was determined to finish the war successfully. He had become tied, like William III earlier, to European politics.

Many people of the middle class were becoming tired of the war, however. Every day the London coffee-shops were full of gentlemen who sat and discussed its effects. Marlborough's battles were becoming bloodier and Godolphin's taxes were growing larger. There were many Tories especially who wanted the war to end.

<sup>1</sup> The British flag as it is today was not completed till the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Irish cross of St Patrick was added—red, corner-to-corner, on a white background.

<sup>2</sup> 'Great Britain' is the proper name for England, Wales and Scotland united.

<sup>3</sup> See the plan on page 180.



The coffee-shops were the best place for news. England's first daily newspaper was bought and read there.<sup>1</sup> The gentlemen customers, in their wigs and wide-skirted coats, carried long thin walking-sticks which they leant against the wooden seats beside them. They sat in groups at wooden tables, and the smoke from their long clay tobacco-pipes rose in clouds towards the ceiling. The coffee was served in small glasses. Tea and chocolate could be obtained too, all from overseas.

The coffee-shops were also good places for talking business. A coffee-shop keeper named Edward Lloyd started selling insurance to ship-owners who gathered in his shop. Ships and cargoes had been lost not only in storms at sea and to the enemy, but also to pirates such as the famous 'captains' Kidd, Avery and Teach, who was also called 'Black-beard'.

Ship-owners in Lloyd's coffee-shop were glad to have insurance. Other customers agreed to share the risk, and the business developed. 'Lloyds of London' became the largest insurer of ships and cargoes in the world.

Merchants also sold shares in their businesses while at the coffee-house. This habit developed too, and a London 'stock exchange' was started. Here, in the City of London, merchant bankers began to buy and sell stocks and shares in commercial companies on a regular basis.

The economy was developing, but the war was affecting it. The price of corn had risen, and so had the price of salt. Many kinds of necessary food were being sent abroad to feed the soldiers. Poor Tory squires all over the country were complaining against the war and against the Whigs, who had grown stronger in the war government.

Queen Anne's sympathies were always with the Tories. She refused to support Godolphin and the Whigs in government any longer. Sarah, Marlborough's wife, no longer influenced her, because the queen had found a new favourite, a Tory lady of the court. Sarah's bad temper caused Anne to turn now against Marlborough himself.

Thus all was ready for a return of the Tories and an end to the war. The fact that Marlborough and Godolphin were statesmen, standing above party politics, did not save them from the anger and the envy of men smaller than themselves.

<sup>1</sup> There were also papers of opinion, which appeared less frequently, and political tracts by writers such as the Whigs Addison and Steele and the Tories Swift and Prior. Defoe wrote for both sides.



*The settled society*

When Godolphin was dismissed, he was given money, a pension, to last during the years of his retirement. This was unusual. In earlier days a change of government had usually meant danger for the party entering opposition. Impeachment often meant prison and sometimes death. But now the change was made with less violence than before.

Peaceful change in government is a necessary part of democracy.<sup>1</sup> Progress towards it became possible in eighteenth-century England because people lived in more comfort than before, and society was stronger. People were becoming softer, and less driven to violent action by extreme opinions. They stopped burning witches, too; because now they had less to fear.

There were many attempts to find scientific explanations for the unknown. Man was the master of the world; he need only explore and understand it. Travellers' tales were read with great care. The voyage of the pirate William Dampier round the world, and the experiences of Alexander Selkirk on his lonely island, were studied closely.

It was an age of reason. Words such as 'religion', 'faith', 'honour' and 'loyalty', which drive some people to unreasonable violence, were valued less than in earlier days. Other words such as 'intellect', 'logic', 'critic', 'classic' and 'reality' had become more popular. The brain was now more important than the heart. Health in mind and body mattered more to many people, than demands of the spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Man-made beauty was more pleasing than natural beauty. Rich men seldom see beauty in nature, and even if they do they feel they must improve on it. Thus the gardens of rich houses were carefully made to appear artificial. The trees, hedges and bushes were cut into ornamental shapes. Stone paths were laid between them, and figures of gods and goddesses from Greece and Rome were placed on either side.

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Swift attacked violent and stupid politicians in his satirical book, *Gulliver's Travels*. Its amusing stories are really laughing at the evils of greed, pride, folly and fear.

<sup>2</sup> Some, however, were still much concerned with spiritual matters. The free-masons, a secret group of godly thinkers, increased in numbers at this time. Also, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was formed.



These 'walks', as the paths were called, led usually to the steps of the great house. The doors at the top of the steps were tall, and so were the rows of windows ranged equally on left and right.

Everything inside was made to give pleasure to the eye. There were high, patterned ceilings in the hall and dining-room. The drawing-room, to which the ladies withdrew after dinner, generally had long curtains and richly papered walls. A wide, curved staircase from the hall led to the landing or gallery. A series of bedrooms, large if the house was large, stood on each side of this landing.

Rich men showed such houses to their friends with pride, and they improved them for the entertainment of their guests. The furniture and the ornaments were all delicately shaped and cut. The work of a fine crafts-man was greeted with delight; and this was also true of clothes and jewellery.<sup>1</sup>

Poorer men copied the fashions in such things as well as they were able. Most merchants were able to afford at least a few fine things; and they could, if they were lucky, enjoy more of them by marrying a son or daughter into a rich man's family.

There were no gaps between the social classes, at least not in the towns. Many rich merchants lived like lords. The word 'gentleman', which had once meant only a lord, could now be used for many men of the business and professional middle classes. The word 'esquire', which had once meant someone owning land, could now be used for any gentleman.

There was much mixing of the upper and middle classes. It happened in the coffee-houses, in inns, in public gardens and parks, and at watering-places.

Watering-places, or 'spas', were holiday towns where people went to improve their health. Since Roman times there had always been places where the natural water was considered extremely good for health.

The most famous of these places was Bath, near Bristol. The journey from London took 2–3 days by stage-coach. Ladies and gentlemen went to Bath 'to take the waters', as a kind of holiday. The 'pump-room' was the place where the visitors gathered to drink the local water. They dressed in their finest clothes, and music was played

<sup>1</sup> It applied to poetry too. This was the height of the Augustan age in literature—the age which began with Dryden and ended with Alexander Pope.



while they sat and drank and talked together about the latest news from London, which they called 'town'.

Good manners were practised at Bath. There was a correct and fashionable way of using a lace-edged handkerchief, folding a fan, tapping a snuff-box, bowing to a lady, and handling a pack of cards. When gentlemen took their ladies to the theatre, to the 'ballroom' or dance-hall, or to the shops or public gardens, they behaved well and left their swords at home. The streets were thus safer than in ordinary towns.

Bath became popular; and through the years other spas were developed at Cheltenham, Scarborough, Harrogate, Epsom and Tunbridge Wells. Slowly the polished manners learnt at these places spread to London and all over the provinces. England was at last beginning to become a civilized nation.

One sign of this change was that quarrels were settled less often by duels and more often by friendly argument. So also political rivalry was ended less often by violence and murder, and more often by the results of peaceful election. Papers of opinion, such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*,<sup>1</sup> did much to persuade people that talking was better than fighting.

It was not easy. The English are no less violent than other people. Their natural violence is, however, usually softened by good sense. The character of John Bull was invented to describe the English nation as a whole. John Bull was presented<sup>2</sup> as an 'honest, plain-dealing fellow', bold, easily angered, and liking strong meat, strong drink, sport and the company of good friends. While John Bull finds justice in politics—or 'fair play', as he calls it—he is not likely to support political extremism of any sort.

The more peaceful behaviour of politicians at this time explains the comparatively mild actions of the new Tory government at the end of Marlborough's war. Marlborough himself would not retire easily, however, because he could not believe that his glorious days as a soldier were finished. Often the English treat a hero with less respect

<sup>1</sup> Started by Steele and Addison. In the *Spectator*, Addison presented a character named Sir Roger de Coverley. 'Sir Roger' was a Tory squire, whose opinions and experiences were similar to those of many real country gentlemen.

<sup>2</sup> By Dr John Arbuthnot, friend of Pope and Swift, in a series of satirical tracts. John Bull became the Englishman's picture of Englishmen.



than he expects. Marlborough was accused of taking public money. Disgusted by this accusation, the great duke turned his back on England, and went to live abroad.

Meanwhile the main aim of the Tory government was to obtain a peace treaty with France. Two diplomats were sent to Paris.<sup>1</sup> The treaty which followed gave the British firm bases in north America. The British also kept Gibraltar, the gate-way into the Mediterranean.

This treaty was the last great event in Queen Anne's reign. The health of this Stuart queen had been failing for some time. According to the Act of Settlement, the crown should now pass to the House of Hanover; but many Tories wanted James the Pretender<sup>2</sup> to come from France and claim the crown.

The Whigs acted quickly. An invitation was sent to Germany with great speed. A new king, George of Hanover, was fitting his thick body into British royal robes before James Stuart and the Tories could do anything. George I was 54 years old, and he spoke no English.

### *The rule of the Whigs*

Most Englishmen disliked King George I. They thought that he was stupid and even cruel. He kept his wife locked up in a German prison and spent his time in England with two elderly mistresses. His servants and advisers were German, and everybody knew that he believed Hanover to be a better place than England. During the 13 years of his reign, he returned to Hanover on every possible occasion.

Because he was not able to understand the language, this German king was forced to leave most details of government in the hands of his Whig ministers. They met without him, and their meetings developed into the kind of government by cabinet which England has today.

Decisions in cabinet government are made after discussion among the ministers forming the cabinet. One minister then reports these decisions to the king. Sometimes there are arguments in the cabinet, with ministers taking different sides, but all ministers share responsibility for every decision made in the end.

The idea at first was that all cabinet ministers were equal, but as time went by certain ministers began to lead the others. The leading minister in the cabinet later became known as the prime minister.

<sup>1</sup> One of them was Matthew Prior, the poet.

<sup>2</sup> See the plan on page 180.



One of the first problems faced by the new Whig government developed from the unpopularity of the new king. Riots in favour of James Stuart started in London and several other cities. The government's answer was to pass a Riot Act. This said that any group of 12 or more persons gathered in a public street could be ordered by a magistrate to depart and separate. The magistrate could command soldiers to arrest any who refused to go, and if necessary to shoot at them. Several Jacobite crowds risked death while facing a J.P. reading the Riot Act at them. They shouted that they wanted a Stuart, not a Hanoverian, king.

The trouble was limited at first to riots by students, apprentices and poor people excited by the Jacobite Tories; but a full rebellion soon developed. It began in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Then, in the north of England, a group of gentry attempted to raise support for the Jacobite cause from the country towns.

The government acted fast. It sent an army which defeated the northerners, without much difficulty, at a town called Preston. And on the same day another army stopped the Scots rebels at the Scottish village of Sheriffmuir. The rebellion was over by the time James reached Scotland. He had no choice other than return to France.<sup>2</sup>

The Jacobites now went underground and the whole Tory party suffered from their defeat. It entered a time of shadow which lasted a dozen years. During this time it had no effect even in opposition.

Politics in England were reduced now to quarrels between various groups of Whigs. Each group was a union of large families, and each family was led by a man wanting to become a cabinet minister. The political world was a small one. Everyone knew everyone else. In one year there were 50 M.P.s who were relations!

The rival Whig groups formed both government and the main opposition. One group, the government, depended on the king's support. Another group gathered round the Prince of Wales.

The Prince of Wales was also named George. He hated his father, who treated him like a small child. Whenever George I went away on one of his frequent visits to Hanover, the younger George became

<sup>1</sup> Rob Roy, the Scottish Jacobite outlaw in Scott's novel of that name, was a real person.

<sup>2</sup> This, the rebellion of the Old Pretender, is called 'the' Fifteen' because the year when it happened was 1715.



regent. There was always jealousy when the elder George came back, and anger too. It was natural that the opposition should gather round the younger George, the heir to the throne, because the future lay with him.

England was without chivalry. Its Tory soul seemed dead; but its Whig stomach was very much alive. The Whigs were determined to feed it well.

The main aim of all the Whig families was to provide good financial government. A policy which made money-making easy would always get middle-class support. Ministers thought it good that merchants should be free to put their money into any business without control. All sorts of companies offered shares on the stock market, and the most popular was the huge South Sea Company. When at last it came to ruin, thousands of people lost in it all the money they had.<sup>1</sup>

The most able businessman among the Whigs became England's first great prime minister. His name was Sir Robert Walpole.

Walpole was a squire from Norfolk in East Anglia. He was a fat, comfortable man with a smiling face and a good head for hard bargaining. 'Money talks' is an old English saying. Walpole developed the system of buying support for government policies with bribes.

Walpole was the leader of those who wanted to keep the country at peace. Wars meant high taxes and interfered with trade. For almost 20 years Walpole succeeded in keeping England out of war. He kept taxes low while quietly nursing the country's economy towards new strength. Manufacturers were persuaded and helped to make more, tradesmen to buy more, and shipping merchants to sell more overseas.

### *Whig England*

But the new wealth which was gained was not shared evenly. In all classes of society the rich became richer and the poor became poorer.

More and more rich men ate too much fat meat, drank too much thick red wine, and suffered accordingly from the disease called gout. More and more poor people, living on bread and thin soup, suffered from wasting diseases such as tuberculosis. There was little social justice; and hard work was not enough. Unless a man had good friends

<sup>1</sup> This was a nation-wide financial accident called the South Sea Bubble. One of the share-holders who lost a large sum of money was the writer John Gay. His musical play, *The Beggar's Opera*, is a satire on the dishonesty of the time.



and rose up the economic ladder, he slipped down it and perhaps starved.

At the top of the ladder, the rich Whig peers who were in the government added to their vast estates. They bought public positions for their relations and followers and thus added to their political power. They gained influence in every part of public life: at court, in the civil service, the army and navy, education, and even the church. The peers who were out of government lost position accordingly.

The merchants who grew fat with government help tried to rise high in the social scale. They bought huge estates and imitated the ways of the great lords. Many succeeded in marrying their children into the nobility. Their sons then became lords themselves. The families of merchants who failed to support the government, on the other hand, often moved down the social scale.

A son of a rich man generally went to live at one of the best public schools—Eton or Harrow, perhaps—and then on to Oxford or Cambridge university. His education was usually completed by the 'grand tour'. This was a journey with a teacher through France and Italy, practising French in Paris and sampling life in Renaissance cities such as Venice, Florence and Milan. The grand tour was the polish to an education, making the young man fit for any position at the top of society. An elder son went generally into politics, because that was a quick way to power and profit. Places for younger sons were found in the army, navy or church.

Great new country houses were built at this time. Some of them looked like small palaces because their owners considered that sort of building grand and beautiful.<sup>1</sup> Even the plainer ones were like palaces inside, having many rooms filled with rich works of European art collected during the grand tour. Outside, green parks reached up to wooded hills. These parks were well stocked with new and expensive plants, bushes and trees brought in from abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Weeds were cleared from lakes and rivers. The rivers were deepened and formed into canals across the countryside. These canals became a popular way of moving loads. They were cheaper and safer than the rough, dangerous highways.

<sup>1</sup> Rich and ornamental building of that time is called 'baroque'. There was a baroque style in literature too.

<sup>2</sup> The arrangement of these parks was called land-scaping. The poet William Shenstone was a gentleman farmer who land-scaped his estate.



The new land-owner was a man with interests in both town and country. His estate was usually only part of his business. He was not as close to his tenants as the regular sort of squire was. The main aim of the rich new squire was to use his estate as a step in the ladder towards social advancement.

Often he and his family stayed in London, 'town', during the London 'season'. This usually lasted from winter to spring and was the time for 'receptions' at the town palaces of great lords. There were also other parties and balls during the 'season', and theatres and all kinds of costly entertainment. This was the time, too, for mothers to find suitable husbands for their daughters. In March and April the ballrooms and drawing-rooms of the town houses became a kind of marriage market-place. Mothers obtained 'engagements' for their daughters to be married perhaps later in the year.

After the London season, the Whig family returned to its country house for summer and the delight of bringing the harvest in. The new squire did not intend to lose money from his estate. He was a businessman, and he demanded a high standard of efficiency from his yeomen-tenants. He wanted intelligent, hard-working and dutiful men.<sup>1</sup> He was quite prepared to reward those who paid their rents regularly and who supported him at election time. But equally he was prepared to throw out of their farms any who failed to do these things.

Thus, even among the yeomen class, there were some who became richer as a result of the system, while others lost all they had.

Every farmer with an income from his own land of 40 shillings a year was allowed to vote. But most farmers also rented fields. Elections were struggles for power between the most important families in the district. The voting was open, not secret, so any landlord could see which way his tenants voted.

In the towns, too, voters were controlled by their masters, who were usually the local businessmen. A clever merchant could trade the votes he controlled for some favour or reward. Politics had become an important game for greedy men.

A place where most of the votes were controlled by one rich man

<sup>1</sup> The country people were simple and poorly educated. The first English novel about real people, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, was written at that time. It developed out of the need for 'a little volume of letters, in a common style' for those unable to compose letters themselves.



was called a 'pocket borough'. That is, the votes were in the rich man's pocket. A place where only a few people had the right to vote was called a 'rotten' borough. Elections in rotten boroughs were easily controlled.

Most of the voters in the towns belonged to the lower middle-class—that is, people lower than tradesmen but higher than common labourers (who in most towns and cities had no votes). Apprentices and skilled workmen were lower middle-class. Politically the journeymen, as the skilled workmen were called, were strong. That was because they joined together in 'friendly societies'—a sort of trade union—which met in inns and discussed local politics and working conditions. It is here, in the friendly societies, that the main roots of English democracy were spread.

Many of these men could read and write well. Many were the products of 'charity' schools. These schools had been started, mainly by nonconformist groups, as a Christian way of helping poor people. They developed, largely under Anglican control, as places of primary education fit to produce clerks for local government and business offices.

In the hard working conditions of the town or city, with a 14-hour day and most operations done by hand rather than machine, an office position was much desired.

The best positions were in government offices. They were the prizes promised at election time by politicians to their friends, families and supporters. Many important government positions included responsibility for handling public money, and some of them gave splendid opportunities for putting it to private use.

Thus many people in different classes found ways of profiting from politics. Few of them respected honesty, although most pretended to be shocked at the lack of it, and the lack of justice, in public affairs. They believed one thing, and said another. Some even persuaded themselves that conditions were quite different from the true facts.

The English have always been clever at deceiving themselves, and therefore others, in this way. It is a fault in character which is called humbug. It has earned for the English both friends and enemies among people in other countries.

### *From peace to war*

Sir Robert Walpole's management of the political system did not



help to restore good moral behaviour in public life. Men whose fathers and grandfathers had worked for political freedom and social justice now saw government, Parliament, the public services and even the church,<sup>1</sup> as diseased and rotten.

But Walpole was caught in a system which he could not control. He needed friends. The king was old, and the opposition was grouped round his son George, Prince of Wales. Luckily, Walpole had one friend who was very close to Prince George. That was the prince's wife, Caroline.

Caroline was a splendid woman. She was short and fat, with the coarse speech and temper of a man, but she was clever and determined. When George I died, it was Caroline who acted as regent whenever her husband, George II, made one of the frequent royal visits to Hanover.

George II was already in middle age, 44 years old, when he came to the throne. Most of the English thought him as stupid as his father. He tried harder than his father to understand them, however, and he cared for England even though Hanover always had first claim on his attention. As the years went by, he had the good sense to depend on Walpole more and more. He gave Walpole the house which became the home of future prime ministers: 10 Downing Street, near Parliament at Westminster.

George was much influenced by Caroline, whom he loved very dearly. Following the royal custom in those days, he kept several mistresses, but he never lost his love and respect for Caroline.

In the same way that George I had disliked his son, so George II and Caroline disliked their son Frederick, Prince of Wales. Again the heir to the throne became the political centre round which the opposition groups gathered like flies.

When Caroline died, from an illness which she had kept secret, Walpole needed friends even more. People were tired of his policy of continual peace. They wanted excitement. They thought of themselves in the character of John Bull—brave and bold.

The prize for bold action was trade in the Spanish colonies of the New World. The excuse for war was provided by a sea-captain named Jenkins, who had been captured while trading unlawfully in the

<sup>1</sup> Edward Young, the poet-author of 'Night Thoughts', was a man who became a parson in his search for social advancement.



Spanish Main. Jenkins said that the Spanish had punished him by cutting off one of his ears. And he showed the ear, which he had preserved in a bottle, to Members of Parliament at Westminster in order to prove his story.

The opposition M.P.s shouted for revenge. The cry for war with Spain became so popular<sup>1</sup> that Walpole could not resist it.

The War of Jenkins' Ear, as it is called, was mainly a sea war. But the navy, which was poorly prepared after 20 years of peace, did badly in it.<sup>2</sup> The most famous deed was a 4-year voyage round the world by George Anson, a naval officer. Anson became an admiral—the highest rank in the British navy. The remaining years of Admiral Anson's life were spent in building up the navy, until it became the finest in the world.

Meanwhile the war was a failure. It yielded no profit. Walpole was blamed for the lack of success and was forced to resign. He died in retirement 3 years later.

The government was managed now by two of Walpole's rich Whig friends: Henry Pelham and his brother the Duke of Newcastle. The opposition round Prince Frederick demanded a greater effort to win the war. Some complained that the government was working more for Hanover than it was for England. A leading M.P., William Pitt, said that money was being wasted because it was being used to pay Hanoverian soldiers.

William Pitt was a man with an unusual background. Unlike most of the great Whigs, he came from the new middle class. His grandfather, a merchant in India, had become governor of Madras. The old man retired rich, and with his money he bought influence in several rotten boroughs. From one of these, a place called Old Sarum, William Pitt was 'elected' to Parliament.

King George II was angry when Pitt opposed his policy in Hanover, because the war with Spain had developed into a war with France, and Hanover was threatened.

George with several thousand British soldiers won a victory over a

<sup>1</sup> The poet James Thomson reflected popular feelings in the stirring lines:

Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;

Britons never will be slaves.

<sup>2</sup> The writer Tobias Smollett served at sea, and later described his terrible experiences in his first novel, *Roderick Random*.



French army at the battle of Dettingen. He was a brave man, and led the attack himself. It was the last occasion when an English king personally led his soldiers in battle; but it did no good. Two years later his younger son, the Duke of Cumberland, was bloodily defeated in another battle, Fontenoy.

With so many soldiers in Flanders, the island of Britain was left dangerously bare. The hopes of the Jacobites were raised. The Old Pretender was retired now, but their hopes depended on his son.

Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, was a man of action. His rebellion, 'the 'Forty-five', came much nearer to success than 'the 'Fifteen'. Although he had only 7 men when he landed boldly on the west coast of Scotland, the Scottish families—or 'clans'—soon came to him in large numbers. Charles Stuart entered Edinburgh with all Scotland at his feet. And a small army of government soldiers which came against him was easily scattered at the battle of Prestonpans.

The Scots called this royal pretender 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'. 'Bonnie' means good-looking and gay. In legend he is a kind of young cavalier, a fine-spirited fellow, colourful in a Scottish skirt, or 'kilt', and lovely to the ladies. Bonnie Prince Charlie was the last of the Stuarts. The manner of his failure to win England back for the Stuart family increases even the sympathy of Englishmen for him.

The young prince crossed the border with 6,000 Scots, hoping for support from the Jacobite Tories. But at Derby in the midlands it became clear that few would come to him.<sup>1</sup> He waited and then he moved back north.

That winter his rebel army beat the English, who were following him, at Falkirk near Edinburgh. By the following spring, however, an English army with soldiers fresh back from Europe had moved after him into northern Scotland. The Duke of Cumberland was in command. One cold and rainy April day, on a stony moor called Culloden, the Scots Jacobites fell in heaps, cut down by the fire of Cumberland's heavy guns.

Cumberland now began a reign of terror in Scotland. With fire and sword his men burned villages and cut down not only the rebels who hid there but women and children too.

These months after the battle of Culloden were, for Prince Charles, a time of wandering, hiding, and escape. Helped by a few friends, he

<sup>1</sup> In London, George II's loyal citizens were singing a new national song, 'God save the King', by the poet Henry Carey.



moved slowly west towards the coast, secretly. At last, dressed in woman's clothes and helped by a farmer's daughter named Flora Macdonald, he escaped by boat to the island of Skye. From there he sailed back to France.<sup>1</sup>

### *The first British empire*

Cumberland's cruelty in Scotland sent many Scots refugees to swell the colonist population of the New World.

There were now over a million British in north America. The population there was mixed. It included Quaker refugees from England, Catholic refugees from Ireland and many refugees from other European countries. Also, there were several thousand criminals who had been transported there from English prisons. Georgia, the thirteenth British colony in America, was started as a fresh home for prisoners in debt.

But not all the people in the thirteen colonies were refugees and criminals. Thousands of farmers and fishermen, labourers and tradesmen had chosen to go as free men. They and their families were attracted by the natural wealth of that undeveloped land.

Many of them had chosen a way of life which was extremely dangerous. Some of them hunted for the furs of wild animals among the snow forests of Canada. Others built high fences to protect their log cabins from Indians along the St Lawrence and Hudson rivers. Others continually risked the Atlantic waves with small trading ships and heavy cargoes.

William Pitt as a young man soon recognized the value of this trade. He was also among the first to realize that the main danger to it came from England's age-long rival and enemy: France.

At a time when politics were in the hands of rich Whig families like the Pelhams, it was unusual for a man from the common middle class to succeed at Westminster. Pitt was called 'the great commoner'. He was a man with unusual powers. He was not a healthy man. He suffered from gout and walked with sticks. The pain sometimes affected his mind and resulted in attacks of madness. But he had great strength of mind. He was a splendid speaker, too, and never failed to command attention in the House of Commons.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Scott's novel *Red Gauntlet* supposes a fresh attempt, some years later, by Bonnie Prince Charlie to gain the throne. The truth is that there was no second attempt. Jacobite hopes were now finished for ever.



Pitt got his first government position in the year following the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden. The country was still not prepared for a long war with France, and certainly not for a sea war. But Pitt knew that England must fight a sea war. He said that French trading places all over the world must be captured, and that the French in Canada must be conquered. The French in Canada were the main threat to the British in America.

Frederick, Prince of Wales, died. King George II did not like Pitt; and Frederick's son, Prince George, the new heir to the throne, was only a boy. Pitt could find no support at court.

Then Henry Pelham died and his brother, the Duke of Newcastle, became prime minister. Both were careful men, good party managers and good at finance, but neither was good at preparing for war.

So Pitt, speaking through Parliament, called to the people. After a few weeks out of government, he came back to share power with the Duke of Newcastle. In a series of speeches he stirred the spirit of the whole nation.

The Seven Years' War between France and England was a world war. Fighting which had already started in north America spread to Europe, Africa and Asia. Each country was trying to protect its overseas trade by attacking the colonies of the other. The trade routes also were under attack.

The French won the first victory by taking the island of Minorca in the Mediterranean. Admiral Byng, the commander of British ships at Gibraltar, abandoned the island. He was ordered back to England, judged guilty of neglect of duty, and executed on the deck of his own ship.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after this, Pitt gained command of the war. 'I know,' he had said, 'that I can save the country and that I alone can.' Now he summoned the nation's courage, and made his plans.

At first there were more defeats. The Duke of Cumberland lost Hanover to the French. In America, the British armies failed to defend the colonists properly against the Canadian French. In India, Suraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, threw the British settlers out of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

But then the British victories began. In the south of India, a young

<sup>1</sup> The French writer Voltaire supposed that this act was the British way of persuading their other admirals to fight better!

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moved slowly west towards the coast, secretly. At last, dressed in woman's clothes and helped by a farmer's daughter named Flora Macdonald, he escaped by boat to the island of Skye. From there he sailed back to France.<sup>1</sup>

### *The first British empire*

Cumberland's cruelty in Scotland sent many Scots refugees to swell the colonist population of the New World.

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East India Company clerk named Robert Clive had already seized Arcot, and defended it, from Chunda Sahib and the French. Now a self-made soldier, Clive regained Calcutta and, at Plassey in Bengal, he defeated Suraj-ud-Daula's great army. Both the south and the east of India were thus freed from French control.

After this Clive obtained great wealth from the Indian princes. He was accused by Parliament of taking it unlawfully, and some years later he killed himself. The English regard him as a kind of hero, nevertheless. He had certainly proved that more money could be taken out of India by conquest than could be gained by ordinary trade.

The hero in Canada was General Wolfe, who was the man chosen by Pitt to regain Britain's position there. The French possessed all the area round the great lakes at the head of the St Lawrence river. The key to their position was a group of French forts on the Heights of Abraham which guarded Quebec. Wolfe's army was taken in ships up the river. His soldiers climbed the cliffs in darkness, and thus surprised the French defenders of the forts. James Wolfe himself was killed on the Heights, at the moment of his victory.<sup>1</sup> The town of Montreal fell to the British soon afterwards.

In these years of victory, the British empire became the world's largest. It included parts of Canada, America, the West Indies and India, together with bits of the West African coast. It was an empire bordered by the sea, and it could only be supplied and supported by sea.

The navy which Anson had nursed for 10 years was by now prepared and ready. Admiral Boscawen caught a French fleet sailing through Gibraltar, hunted it and sunk 5 ships at Lagos on the coast of Portugal. Admiral Hawke went after another French fleet and followed it into Quiberon Bay on the French Atlantic coast. Among the rocks, and with a strong wind blowing, his ships destroyed the French ships one by one.

Britain now controlled the seas. Even Manila in the Philippines was captured from the sea, bringing to the British the trade in China tea.

In Europe, too, the British began to do well. British soldiers at the battle of Minden helped the Hanoverians regain their country from the French.

But a year afterwards, the old king, George II, died. He had reigned

<sup>1</sup> Wolfe had spoken Thomas Gray's recent poem 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' to his officers, including the line: 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.'



for 33 years. His grandson, George III, wanted a reformation in government. Pitt, the great war leader, must go.

### *Changes in society*

Pitt was probably Britain's greatest empire-builder. He could not, however, make the English keep their interest in overseas affairs. Other leaders have tried later in history and have also failed.

The Englishman lives on an island, and often he does not see beyond the coast. His view is usually limited to his home, his place of work, and the place where he goes for his yearly holiday. For as long as the shops can supply him with all the foreign goods he needs, he does not generally worry about the places where they come from.

This was true also of the common people in eighteenth-century England. They lived as their fathers had lived, ploughing the land, laying fishing-nets, cutting wood, hammering iron, and selling simple things at market. The edge of the world for most people was still the parish boundary. They were born in the village, they worked their lives in the fields around it, and they were buried in the parish churchyard.

Nothing changed in the countryside. It remained peaceful and unaffected by the world outside. The green hills and valleys did not change, and neither did the marshes and high moors. The lakes and pools, with the rivers, streams and waterfalls, kept the land fertile. The fields gave good crops and good grass for cattle and sheep. The hills and woods gave shelter to the lonely farms. The villages lay 3 to 5 miles from each other; and each village was only a group of cottages round an old stone church with muddy tracks winding between them.<sup>1</sup>

Life in the village was still influenced most greatly by the parson and the squire. Many parsons lived comfortably, in the best house in the village. The Anglican church was safe now, and it was rich. Many parsons had become lazy, caring more for social position and income from the glebe than for doing Christ's work and caring for poor people's souls.<sup>2</sup>

On Sunday mornings, the Anglican parson preached dully to a sleeping audience. The squire with his family sat in the front row. In the next

<sup>1</sup> During the Augustan age in literature, only the poet Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, had shown interest in the simple and natural beauty of the English countryside. Now literary fashion was changing, however, with the poets Gray and Collins recording their delight in the natural scene.

<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' was a better kind of country parson.



row behind were perhaps the doctor, the bailiff and the shop-keeper. The farmers and other middling people, with their families, all had their particular seats in the middle of the church.

The poor labouring villagers sat woodenly at the back, near the great oak doors through which the wind blew sharpest. After the parson had finished, they could return home to Sunday lunch—cooked meat, perhaps.<sup>1</sup> Possibly that is all they thought about, because few of them had meat meals in the week. Certainly not many of them worried about their souls.

Church did not solve the problems of everyday life; but poor people have problems no less than rich people. The parson had influence in the village because he was educated, and often because he was a good businessman, rather than because he was a minister of God.

John Wesley was a man who wanted a method in religious life. He believed that a priest must *act* as a holy man, by working for the common people and not only by preaching to them. And Wesley was an organizer, not a dreamer. He started a society called the Methodists. It included his brother Charles<sup>2</sup> and a preacher named George Whitefield. They and their followers spent many years travelling through the towns and countryside of Britain, preaching reform of the church and reform in national life.

At first the Methodists reminded people of the Puritans, and they were not popular. They held their meetings on village greens, in market squares and in city parks. They were always in the open air, because the churches were closed to them. Often the Anglican squires and parsons hired crowds of rough people to attack the Methodists with stones, rotten fruit, and mud. They did this because they regarded Methodism as a danger to their easy way of life.

But the Methodists stayed, and grew in numbers. After many years they separated from the Anglican church. They put up their own buildings for worship, and called them 'chapels'. They became strongest in Wales, but over the last two centuries more people in England have joined the Methodist church than any other nonconformist group. Mainly it has become a church for poor people.

<sup>1</sup> The meat of a fat bull, cooked in its own juice, became known as 'the roast beef of Old England'. It is 'John Bull's' favourite food.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Wesley wrote nearly 6,000 Christian songs, or hymns, many of which are still sung today.



The society which the Methodists tried to reform, was badly in need of reformation. One of the worst evils was gambling. Some people were prepared to risk even their clothes in a 'wager' or bet. Rich men gambled thousands of pounds at horse-racing, card-playing, and dice. Poor people were prepared to bet all the shillings they had at bull-baiting, cock-fighting and street games. The result was a great increase in the number of persons in prison for debt. The main debtors' prison in London, 'the Fleet', was a terrible place. Other prisons—'the Marshalsea', 'Newgate', 'the King's Bench'—were equally beastly. The prisoners lived between damp stone walls, often underground.

There was also the evil of too much strong drink. The rich drank wine, sometimes two bottles at each meal. The poor drank cheap gin, made from grain and much stronger than beer. Five million gallons of gin were bought from thousands of gin shops in one year alone. It was the chief cause of city crime.

Another evil which the Methodists attacked was public behaviour, which they thought disgusting. People made wind, and spat, and watered in the streets. Their language was full of coarse words, or 'oaths'. Their speech was full of rude and immoral meanings.<sup>1</sup> Although polite manners were practised at the holiday spas, they took a long time to spread, even among the middle classes.

Certainly good manners were absent from many manor-houses, where the old-fashioned kind of regular squire cared more for his bottle, and for his hunting-dogs and horses.<sup>2</sup> It was not easy for the small squire to compete in the fashionable world, even if he wished. He could not afford the expense of a London season. He could scarcely find enough money to improve his estate, or compete with his neighbours.

The rich squires were buying new seed-sowing machines which planted in straight lines and at a proper depth. They also bought new Leicestershire sheep and fat straight-backed cows to improve their flocks and herds. They experimented with seeds of new kinds of fruit and vegetables. They cut wood for fences to enclose more fields. Soon almost the last of the common land had disappeared.

The poor squire could not afford most of the ideas introduced by the

<sup>1</sup> The coarseness appears in many novels of that time, including Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. And Sterne was a man of the church!

<sup>2</sup> Many, nevertheless, were more civilized than the rough families in Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.



merchant-farmers, and his wife could not afford the comforts which their wives enjoyed. Nevertheless, every man desires to stand on his own land and even to own all the land that he can see. From his manor doorsteps, the rough squire in his snuff-stained greatcoat and muddy boots looked out over his demesne field and wondered how long he could continue to face the competition of his neighbours. Many such men, whose families had farmed the land for centuries, were forced at last to sell.

The buyers had capital, and they farmed for profit. They made their tenants enclose the land and compete with other tenants. 'Animals are machines for changing grass into meat and milk and wool,' they said. 'Let no fields lie empty. Change the crops once a year: wheat, root-crops, corn, and grass. That is the new system.' Although the better yeomen were able to improve their yields in this way, many more could not compete. The new landlords threw them out.

Thousands of poor farm labourers were put out of work also and went to swell the populations of the towns and cities.<sup>1</sup> There they struggled against the dangers of dirt, disease and gin. A gin-drinker could become senseless for two pennies. If he spent a shilling or two a week on the raw drink, he soon sickened and died. The city meant a strange way of life for a countryman. Often he took a few chickens, or a couple of pigs or a cow with him in an effort to keep his family alive. A child who lived to the age of 30 was lucky in the dirtiest parts of London at that time.

Many out-of-work people went into the care of parish authorities. Some became 'poachers'—that is, they went into the woods and unlawfully caught small animals and birds for food. Families became separated. Women and children went into parish workhouses. From there they were hired out to any manufacturer or tradesman wanting cheap labour.

The children of such people, and their children even more, were going to suffer increasingly in the years to come. Old England was changing. More canals were being cut, and more mines dug. New inventions in science and industry were already pointing the way to an economic revolution. Soon tall chimneys would rise up, at first only singly or in scattered groups, but each blowing its thin warning stream of smoke across the countryside.

<sup>1</sup> But not as many as suggested by Goldsmith's poem, 'The Deserted Village'.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 6

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
1689–1700				
William III (1689–1702)	Louis XIV Charles II	Arabs at Mombasa	Aurangzeb	British in South Pacific
1701–10				
Anne (1702–14)	Peter the Great	Lunda states Akwamu	Bahadur Shah Govind Singh	British take Gibraltar
1711–20				
George I (1714–27)	Prince Eugene	Kwena of Sechele	Yoshimune	French at New Orleans
1721–30				
Sir Robert Walpole	Louis XV	Opuku Ware Moulay Ismail	Bugis in Johore	French in Mauritius
1731–40				
George II (1727–60)	Philip V of Spain	Iyasu II	Nadir Shah	Mompox Vitus Bering
1741–50				
Henry Pelham	Voltaire J. S. Bach	Ashanti empire	Mahmud I Kao Tsung	French in Canada
1751–60				
Duke of Newcastle Pitt, the elder	Frederick the Great Pombal	Kazembe state Funj in Kordofan	Balaji Rao Alaungpaya Mangku Bumi	Abdul Wahhab Maoris in New Zealand



## *The Coming of Machines*

### *The state of the nation*

'Born and educated in this country,' said George III in his first speech from the throne, 'I glory in the name of Britain.' The island stood now at the centre of a great empire, stretching east and west. Its young king, the third of its Hanoverian rulers, knew well that Britain was much more important than Hanover could ever be. He hoped to become the first great British emperor.

The future was bright. The rivers Thames, Severn and Mersey were filled with tall ships containing cloth and tea from the east, tobacco and sugar from the west. These goods were cheap, and were bought in large quantities by the common people. The company merchants who supplied them—the 'nabobs' of the India trade and the 'creoles' of the West Indies trade—were among the richest men in England.

While raw cotton imported mainly from America supplied the spinning and weaving industries which dotted the countryside, most of the raw materials for cottage industries were already present in England. There was wool for the warm clothes made in Yorkshire and East Anglia. There was clay for the pots made in Staffordshire. There was iron for tools and other metal articles. And, more important than anything else, there was coal. England's economy depended increasingly on coal, huge fields of it lying under the ground in Northumberland, Durham and the midlands, all waiting to be dug up. Already there was an engine to pump water out of mines and thus make the mining of coal, iron and other metals both easier and safer.

The future of the island lay not only in coal, however, but also in men's minds. The Royal Society, begun in the reign of Charles II, had been a meeting-place for scientists for 100 years. When the men of science began to share their ideas with inventors and businessmen, there was a free flow of ideas ready to be put to profit.

The Restoration of Charles II had led to the separation of the Puritan groups from public life, and after that many of these nonconformists had



turned to trade and industry as their only way to wealth. Then, after the Glorious Revolution of William III, they had become free to develop their businesses unhindered, without interference from either church or state.

The sons of these new manufacturers were sensible and God-fearing. They were hard-headed men who knew the value of careful living. They did not spend their profits, but instead kept the money in their businesses.

They were assisted by the financial system. The Bank of England had become a banker's bank, providing support for people wanting to lend or borrow money for business purposes. Private banks were started even in small towns.

Then, as we have seen, trade increased greatly under Sir Robert Walpole and the Whigs. Their easy form of government helped good businesses to develop. There was no government planning or interference. Industries too were able to grow naturally in answer to market demand.

Manufacturers now were in a happy position. They had capital or the means to borrow it. Scientific and mechanical inventions, especially in the coal and iron industries, were being steadily perfected and developed. Most of the problems of industrial development were thus being solved.

The main problem was a lack of labour. The population was about 7 million and was only slowly increasing. But already the number of deaths due to disease was being reduced steadily. Improvements in hospitals meant that fewer children died at birth. Orphan children—those without parents—were kept in special homes called orphanages. Children aged 10–12 were now being taken increasingly both from orphanages and from parish workhouses into the manufacturing trades.

Another problem was how to move raw materials quickly and cheaply to the area of manufacture and then how to move the manufactured products to the market place. The answer was to build more artificial canal waterways. The movement of heavy loads such as coal and iron was cheaper by water than by road. And canals were smoother and safer for breakable goods, such as glass and china.

The rough highways, still dusty in summer and muddy in winter, were being slowly improved, however. New 'turnpike' roads were used increasingly. The turnpike was a bar across the road at a place where travellers must pay a 'toll'. The tolls paid were intended for use



in the improvement of the road. On some roads the turnpikes were managed by private companies, on others by local authorities, and the money paid went to them.

There were various sorts of coaches on the roads. The 'gig' was a lightweight carriage, with two large wheels, pulled by one horse. Only two people could sit on it, and it was for private use over short distances. The 'post-chaise' had four wheels and two horses. It was used by rich people for travelling from town to town, pairs of horses being hired at posting houses on the way.

The 'stage', a public coach for common use over long distances, had no springs. It was hard and uncomfortable. The passengers crowded not only inside but on the roof and at the back also. There was often a guard against highwaymen. He sat outside, holding a 'blunderbuss'—a big gun which shot many small pieces of metal over a wide area. The 'stages' at which the coachman stopped to change horses were usually inns. The passengers rested there too, and had a meal. Only the shortest journeys lasted less than a day.

These coaching inns, on the main roads, were popular also with the local country people. In the 'smoking-room' they could hear the latest news from town, and see the newspapers, and receive mail. Many inns were meeting-places for people of all classes.

At some inns there was entertainment and sport. The inn-yard was used, for example, for 'prize-fighting'. The 'prize-fighters' were boxers fighting bare-handed without gloves, for a money-prize. Arguments were settled in this way, too, according to set rules. John Bull likes 'fair play', and 'fair play' is obtained more easily in boxing than in fights with sticks and knives.

The village inn was usually near the village green, the home of another sport: cricket. It was a game played in much the same way as today, except that the bat was curved and the ball was bowled under-arm, along the ground. It was played both by gentlemen and by 'locals'—that is, the local villagers. Cricket in England is a game for summer, when the grass is fresh and not too wet, and daylight lasts long into the cool evenings.

Hunting and shooting were the main winter sports for gentlemen. The best creature to hunt was the fox, the wild animal of the dog family which wears red fur and has pointed ears and nose and a bushy tail. When hunted with dogs called fox-hounds he runs for miles in a straight line



over the cold hard ground, through leafless hedges, over banks and walls, and across icy streams, aiming always for the hole into the earth which is his home. The hunters on horseback follow close behind the hounds and try to be there at 'the kill'. It is a wild sport and a bloody one.

The British do not shoot foxes. Their guns are kept for birds called 'game'. Game-shooting too is done in winter, or in late autumn after the corn has been cut. Dogs are used, as in fox-hunting, but they are of a different kind. The work of the gun-dog is to drive the birds into the air and bring the dead ones to his master. The moors of Yorkshire and the marshes of East Anglia were (and still are) two of the best areas for shooting game birds. Like fox-hunting, it is a violent sport.<sup>1</sup>

The gentlemen who stayed in London during winter had no opportunity for such exciting entertainment. Their quieter, and warmer, place of enjoyment was the club. This was the place where they could meet their friends and exchange news and conversation.

The clubs developed from the coffee-houses which had been so popular at the beginning of the century. They were managed for profit by a committee of members, but the total number of members in each club was limited. If a gentleman wanted to become a member, he must be 'proposed and seconded' by existing members and then approved by the committee. In this way, friends of the same class and interests in society could belong to the same club. Each club was slightly different, therefore, from every other club.

For example, there was the Beef-steaks society which offered good food and drink to theatre-people. There was also Boodle's club, where fashionable young men—fops or 'beaus', later called 'dandies'—appeared in extremely high wigs, tiny hats, and coats cut back above the knee. And there was Dr Johnson's club for literary men.<sup>2</sup> The two great political clubs were White's for the Tories, and Brooks's for the Whigs.

<sup>1</sup> Hunting and shooting are called 'blood sports'. The English countryside offers quieter delights of course, such as gardening and the study of nature. The poet William Cowper was a man who preferred these more peaceful joys.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson is the famous subject of a biography by James Boswell. He was the friend of many writers and was a writer himself. He is known best, however, as a splendid talker and as an observer of human behaviour. Oliver Goldsmith was a member of his club. So also was the great historian, Edward Gibbon.



These clubs were mainly for men,<sup>1</sup> and they were great places for gambling. A man could lose several thousand pounds at cards in a single evening. But they were also great places for good talk, particularly for that quickness of the mind which is called wit.

The great wealth of many of the club people was a sign of the general wealth of top society in London in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was not all evil. The rich gave employment to cottage industries by providing a market for good-quality household articles.

There was a large demand for good furniture, for example. Chairs and tables by famous craftsmen such as Chippendale and Hepplewhite are still in use today. They were works of art, delicately planned and beautifully made. The ornamental work in buildings planned by the Adam brothers was also beautiful. So too were the china cups and plates made by Josiah Wedgwood.

The clothes of rich people were extremely colourful. Gentlemen wore coats and undercoats of silk (red, blue, violet, green, yellow and silver), with lace at the throat and wrists. Their white wigs had rows of fat curls for each side of the face. Their knee-length stockings were made of smooth silk, and even their shoes were sometimes coloured.

The ladies were dressed even more richly. Their hair was built high up over a frame which had false curls added to it. Their faces were powdered white, with red only on the cheeks and sometimes a little black 'beauty-patch' stuck on the cheek or jaw. Neck-lines were often low. The dress fitted tight round the waist and then widened hugely over a skirted frame. The skirt at the back was often gathered into a 'bustle', so that it was not easy to sit down! A lady in full dress at a reception or ball occupied a wide area of room.

At the theatre, these fine ladies sat with their husbands in the side boxes, which were sometimes as large as small rooms. From these they could look down at the noisy young 'beaus' in the pit, or up at the common people (who were sometimes even noisier) in the back galleries.

Theatre audiences saw some splendid acting, for this was the time of

<sup>1</sup> Women were second-class citizens in eighteenth-century England. Lord Chesterfield in one of his famous *Letters to his Son* said: 'Women are only children of larger growth. ... A man of sense only plays with them ... he neither tells them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters.' Chesterfield was a much respected man. The description of him as the cruel Sir John Chester in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* is not a just one.



the first great English actors. David Garrick was the greatest of them all. He performed successfully in comedy, in tragedy, and in romantic plays. Nevertheless, although good actors and actresses were extremely popular on stage they were not regarded highly in society, and even the fame of Garrick did not improve their social position much.

Some of the artists and writers did better, however. The Royal Academy of Arts was started by a painter, William Hogarth, and continued by another, Joshua Reynolds, who was made a knight. Although no fine writers were knighted, several of them were accepted in high society. In most cases this was due to qualities of personal character, nevertheless, rather than to their worth in literature.<sup>1</sup>

Generally the social classes were becoming more separated. A move upwards in the social scale required much wealth and a lot of strong determination. The upper class, particularly the land-owning Whig peers, were richer than ever. And the more people talked about the need for reform in society, the more carefully they guarded their positions.

The two best ways of moving upwards were still marriage, and politics.

### *Rebellion in America*

William Pitt, 'the great commoner', resigned from office when George III came to the throne. The new king looked at politics more personally than his grandfather had. He was determined to influence government himself by choosing his own ministers. And his favourite was a Tory, the Earl of Bute.

The Whigs had been ruling England for nearly 50 years. It was no longer possible for a king to control events, and George certainly did not wish to rule like a dictator. He was a solid young man, and a rather stupid one, but he was not severe. His main delight was agriculture. He was much interested in the improvements that were taking place in it, and he became known as 'Farmer George'.

With Pitt in opposition, the Earl of Bute managed to make peace with France. The aim of Bute's government was to reduce taxes and thus gain the support of the country squires. The peace treaty was unpopular, however. It angered the City merchants, the 'nabobs' and the 'creoles' especially, for they had hoped for more colonial gains from the war.

<sup>1</sup> While the playwright Sheridan became a government minister, the poet Thomas Chatterton was so poor that he killed himself with poison.



Bute was attacked by an M.P. named John Wilkes in a paper called the *North Briton*.<sup>1</sup> Wilkes was a curious man. His moral standards were low. He was a 'rake', a member of a wicked society of adventurers known as the Hell-fire club. He was brave, however, and extremely clever too, as we shall see.

Bute resigned, and the king now looked for a new minister from among the various parliamentary groups. The man he chose was George Grenville, a well-meaning lawyer who proved a poor politician. He was more concerned with methods than with men.

Grenville's method of reducing taxes at home was to make the colonists in America pay more. The means he used was a Stamp Act which put a tax on all legal papers and newspapers in America. This angered the colonists, many of whom refused to pay.

Meanwhile, Wilkes in the *North Briton* had made a remark against the king, accusing him of dishonestly supporting the French peace treaty. George was very angry, and Wilkes was arrested.

The clever fellow fought back, however. He persuaded his judges that, as a Member of Parliament, his arrest was unlawful. He was not guilty of any crime, he said, and he claimed the right of freedom under *habeas corpus*.

Thus, while the American colonists were publicly attacking the stamp tax offices, the London crowds were out in the streets shouting 'Wilkes and liberty!' Within a few years, Wilkes was a hero in both Britain and America.

The king's third ministry, under a gentle and peace-loving Whig, the Marquis of Rockingham, tried to calm these storms. It tried to please all parties: the court, the merchants, the squires, the London rioters, and the Americans. This was hoping for too much, and of course it failed.

There was now nobody to whom the king could turn, except Pitt. But Pitt was alone. He led no party. Also, he made the great mistake of allowing the king to give him a title, Earl of Chatham, which took him into the House of Lords. His days as 'the great commoner' were finished.

Chatham's opinions on the American problem were well known. He had said about Grenville's Stamp Act: 'I rejoice that America has resisted.' But now he could not provide the leadership necessary for an agreement with the colonists. He was weaker as Chatham than he had been as Pitt.

<sup>1</sup> The poet Charles Churchill also worked for this paper.



The disease called gout attacked him more strongly than ever before, causing him great pain. His brain was affected. There was awful confusion in government as he came near to total madness. Public affairs slipped into the hands of lesser people, and at last he was forced to resign.

Trouble seemed to be multiplying in both Britain and America. In Britain, 'that devil Wilkes,' as the king called him, was performing tricks again. He had been expelled from Parliament and had been declared an outlaw. Nothing could be done, however, about his popularity with the crowd. The electors of the county of Middlesex voted him back into Parliament at the first opportunity.

King George III was extremely angry. Wilkes had become a personal enemy. Crowds were again in the streets, shouting 'Wilkes for ever!' The man was becoming a political threat to the government.

Again it was arranged for Wilkes to be expelled from Parliament and arrested. But even while he was in prison, the Middlesex electors again voted for him to be their M.P.

Once more he was expelled, and once more he was re-elected. The government had failed to calculate the strength of public opinion. A series of letters, signed 'Junius', appeared in the *Public Advertiser* declaring that the right of election was the key to constitutional liberty. No one knew who 'Junius' was, but the messages were clear. The government now was under the Duke of Grafton, another well-meaning but useless peer. It must either admit failure or face a revolution.

At last the king asked the Middlesex electors to accept a man named Luttrell; but their reply was to give Wilkes 1,143 votes and Luttrell only 296. Then, when the government persuaded Parliament to declare Luttrell elected, even sick old Chatham rose up in the House of Lords and attacked it. He warned ministers of the dangers of power. He said that unlimited power makes men dishonest. He accused the government of dishonestly going beyond the law.

Chatham's speech destroyed the Grafton ministry. Wilkes was freed from prison and was loudly welcomed by Londoners with lights and dancing in the streets. Four years later this astonishing man became lord mayor of London, and a Member of Parliament again.

The public in America, too, had tasted success in opposition. The angry colonists had rescued one of their ships from the hands of British customs officers. Small boys in Boston threw snow-balls at the British red-coated soldiers. Revolutionary committees were being formed.



King George, meanwhile, had at last succeeded in finding a minister who, he thought, would provide firm government and keep the people of Britain and its colonies loyal.<sup>1</sup>

Most men of the upper and middle classes agreed that the people must be kept loyal. The cry for liberty through all the 60 years of George III's reign was in fact against Parliament, which was the centre of wealth and power, as much as against the king and his court. The M.P.s (who were mostly squires and merchants) feared the common people, even though some of them occasionally used rioting crowds as a weapon for political gain. The opinion of most thinking people was that the king's government must be carried on whatever happened. And that included governing the colonies too.

George's new minister was Lord North, a charming and lazy man with few enemies in the political world. But North was a Tory. As prime minister he was always content to follow the policies of the king.

The king and North were unbending towards all signs of rebellion. The famous cry of rebels for many years had been, 'No taxation without representation.' That meant, 'The duty to pay taxes carries with it the right to elect a Member of Parliament.'

Some of the American colonists demanded even more. They knew that the right to return a few members to Westminster would be useless to them, because the majority of British M.P.s would always vote against American proposals. These colonists wanted their own American parliament. America was a nation, equal with Britain, they said.

That was an argument which few Englishmen could understand. Not many of them realized that several of the thirteen colonies, in which there were now 2 million people, had reached an advanced state of economic development. While the king and Lord North continued to demand loyalty, many Whig businessmen regarded America only as a market from which they could import cheaply and to which they could export with profit.

The East India Company sold tea to the American colonists at a fair profit but through middle-men, so that the price was high. The colonists must also pay a tax on Company tea. Therefore many of them instead bought smuggled tea, which was cheaper. Then Lord North allowed

<sup>1</sup> Fifty years later Lord Byron, in his poem 'The Vision of Judgment', described George III as an enemy of freedom. The description is one-sided. The king's constitutional duty was to preserve the safety of the state.



the Company to sell direct to American merchants, thus avoiding the middle-men; but the tea continued to be taxed.

Nevertheless, Company tea was now cheaper than smuggled tea, and the smugglers decided to protect their trade. One dark night, 50 colonists dressed as Mohawk Indians, with painted skins and feathers, rushed on to 3 East India Company tea-ships and threw all the Company tea into the water of Boston harbour.

News of the Boston 'tea-party' reached England a month later. Parliament met in great excitement. George and his follower North decided that the rebels must be punished. America must be answered with the threat of force.

For a year the situation went from bad to worse. The trouble was that the government relied too much on the reports of its colonial officials. These officials never properly calculated the effects of strong action on the Americans, especially on those who would have been willing otherwise to stay loyal to the colonial government. That was a mistake which was also made, a century and a half later, in other British colonies.

More people joined the rebels. A meeting of leaders from most of the colonies decided to obtain weapons. They bought cannons and gun-powder from France, Spain and Holland. All trade with England was stopped.

General Gage, with 4,000 British infantry or 'red-coats', held Boston for the government. He decided to seize a store of rebel weapons at Concord, 60 miles away. The soldiers started out, 800 of them, marching in line. They came to the village green at Lexington, where they saw about 70 American militia-men blocking the path in front of them.

Somebody fired a shot. There were more shots, and men began to fall on both sides.

In this way the American war of independence started. It was the first freedom movement ever faced by the British in a colonial possession. And, like later movements in other possessions, it split British public opinion. There were many who were for and many who were against the rebels' right to liberty.

### *The years of defeat*

'If I were an American,' said old Chatham in the House of Lords a year before his death, 'I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never!'



His was the most respected voice against the American war, but there were many others which reflected the opposition to it. Britain was divided. And even those who were for the war were generally against the way it was being fought.

The main opposition in Parliament to Lord North's war ministry was led officially by the Marquis of Rockingham. His party became known as the Rockingham Whigs. But the most fiery opposition came from two young Whigs: Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox.

Burke, who was born in Ireland, had arrived in England as a young law student. Now he was M.P. for Bristol, a fine speaker and a splendid writer. In a letter to his friend Fox he said: 'People crushed by law have no hopes but from power. If laws are their enemies, they will be enemies to laws. And those who have much to hope and nothing to lose, will always be dangerous.'

Charles James Fox was a great fat man. He was London-born, the son of a rich and successful politician named Lord Holland. Unlike Burke, Fox had made speeches against Wilkes and against the freedom of the 'Junius' press. He was known as a Tory, but on the American problem he became a Rockingham Whig. 'Is America to be governed by force,' he asked, 'or by management?'

The truth was, of course, that America could not be governed by either force or management. The country was vast, it was 3,000 miles away, and its people were firm in their demands. The famous Declaration of Independence, made in the first year of the war, stirred the sympathy of many Englishmen.

Even Lord North had no real determination to win the war. He regarded himself as merely the servant of the king. Often he wanted to resign. His policies were weak, and he had no control over military events.

The English do not like to remember their defeats (unless they go with glory), so we will pass quickly over the events of the eight-year war. First there was Boston, where 1,000 red-coats fell in an attempt to drive a number of poorly-armed Americans off the top of Bunker Hill. In the following year George Washington drove the British out of Boston altogether.

Next there was the loss of General Burgoyne's army at Saratoga in the Hudson valley. Then an American sea-captain, John Paul Jones, sailed his ship into the North Sea and captured an English warship near



the Yorkshire coast. Lastly, Washington forced the defeat of a British army of 7,000 men at Yorktown in Virginia.

Meanwhile France and Spain had entered the war on the side of the victorious Americans. In India, the British were saved from the French and their allies among the Indian rulers only by the firm action of the first governor-general, Warren Hastings. In the Mediterranean, the island of Minorca was lost. In the Atlantic, British naval power was saved only by Admiral Rodney's victory over French and Spanish fleets in the West Indies.

'You cannot conquer America,' the great Chatham had said. He had been proved right. The king still refused to admit defeat, but North knew better. On a cold evening in March, with the rain beating down on the roof of Parliament, he at last resigned. The war had become a world war in which Britain, had few friends.

North's ministry had failed not only in foreign affairs but in home rule too. In the year that Holland joined America and its allies France and Spain, the government realized the need to get more men into the army. But there was a great storm of opposition when it tried to include Catholics. People remembered the Jacobite troubles earlier in the century. 'No popery!' they cried. Crowds of angry and frightened Protestants appeared in the London streets, led by a half-mad peer, Lord George Gordon. They were ordinary people, poor and uneducated—the sort that the middle classes had begun to fear.

The crowds attacked Catholic shops and houses. Then they went on to free the criminals from Newgate prison. Night after night, labourers and vagabonds swept through the streets like a Thames flood. They even attacked the Bank of England. The Houses of Parliament were threatened.

Soldiers were needed to put an end to it, because there were no police in London able to deal with riots. The only regular police were the 'Bow Street runners'. There were not many of them and they were not paid wages. Their work was to catch footpads and highwaymen, and for each one caught they got a prize.<sup>1</sup>

The Gordon riots, which lasted over a week, were only partly religious. They were also economic and social. There were respectable working men—skilled mechanics or journeymen', and small tradesmen,

<sup>1</sup> The novelist Henry Fielding was the magistrate who began the Bow Street runners.



for example—among the crowds, wanting to show their feelings against the rich upper classes.

One effect of the riots was to warn men of the upper classes of the danger of reform. The political system was still much like that in Walpole's time. Both Burke and Fox had demanded reform, although Burke went less far than Fox. Burke merely wanted reform of government, to make it more honest, more effective, and less expensive. Fox wanted the reform of Parliament. He came forward as 'the man of the people', demanding an end to the rotten boroughs and more votes for the manufacturing towns. After the shock of the Gordon riots, however, most thinking politicians were cautious about any kind of reform.

After Lord North's resignation, government was carried on by a ministry of the Rockingham Whigs. This included Burke and Fox, and also Chatham's chief follower, Lord Shelburne. It should have done well, but in fact it did little to solve the troubles of those years. Burke the Irishman was not trusted by the rich Whigs, although he was greater than any of them; and he was refused a position in the cabinet. Fox and Shelburne were the best men in the cabinet. Fox did not like Shelburne, however, and quarrelled with him. And it was Shelburne who became first minister when Rockingham died that same year.

Fox was surprised, jealous and angry. He was a man of quick temper, and almost like a play-actor—good at dramatic effect. He now refused to serve under Shelburne, and instead did an astonishing thing. The 'man of the people' formed an alliance with that great enemy of reform, Lord North.

Shelburne's government meanwhile was quietly doing well without the noisy Fox. It recognized officially the independence of the United States. A line was drawn between the U.S. and Canada, which remained British. The government also completed a peace treaty with Britain's European enemies. Spain got Florida, and France got St Lucia, Tobago and Senegal.

Shelburne's chief follower was young William Pitt, son of the great Earl of Chatham. Although Pitt was only 23, Shelburne made him Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It was a fine choice. Pitt was already showing some of the qualities of character possessed by his famous father. He was honest, at a time when most politicians were there merely for gain. He was hard-working, when most were lazy and lived only for pleasure. He was popular in



the country, because it was known that he believed truly in government reform, when most others merely talked about it.

Fox and North together had a large number of followers in Parliament. For a few months they were together in power. Fox attempted to pass an India Bill taking power away from the East India Company and giving it to the government. There were shouts of anger from the opposition groups. People said that India's wealth would go into the pockets of Fox and his friends. Fox would use the wealth to buy support for himself in Parliament. He would rule the country and become a Caesar.

The quarrel was caused almost entirely by political jealousy. Only Burke saw the matter from the view-point of India's poor millions. Only he realized that control by government would be better for them than control by the Company.

At the beginning of this chapter we saw some of the effects of empire on the island's economy. It affected social life too, because rich people were delighted with eastern things. Now we see how the power of empire could affect English political life. Control over India's wealth was a thing which could be bought and sold like control over the rotten boroughs.

It was the king who prevented Fox's India Bill from becoming law. George III had never liked Fox. One of Fox's mistakes had been to get the support of the Prince of Wales. This fine young gentleman, Prince George, had followed family custom by quarrelling with his father. And, as in earlier years, it was natural for the heir to the throne to join the king's political enemies.<sup>1</sup>

George III feared that Fox's plan was to strengthen parliamentary government against the crown. Now it was his royal duty to prove that the crown still had power in politics. Without warning, he demanded that the whole Fox-North ministry must resign.

A day later a new government was presented to Parliament. The king had appointed, as its leading minister, the one politician whom he knew was popular in the country: the 24-year-old reformer, William Pitt.

### *Pitt's years of peace*

George's calculations about Pitt's popularity were correct. At a general election a few months later, this quiet young man was swept back

<sup>1</sup> One of the prince's advisers was the Whig playwright, Sheridan.



into power with a large majority. Many of the old-fashioned politicians were swept away.

Many more remained, however. This was no revolution, and not even a reform of the electoral system. As has happened in other countries in more recent times, more votes were counted than there were voters! And even among the new M.P.s who now entered the House of Commons for the first time, most cared privately more for their own interests than for the common good.

Thus political life in Pitt's England remained very much the same as it had been since the beginning of the century.

The words of the reformers had some effect, nevertheless, at least on public opinion. As we have seen, men of the upper and middle classes regarded political power merely as a weapon to be used in the struggle for business position.<sup>1</sup> There were no ideals in public life. There was no desire for parliament or government to cure social evils in any way. In trade and industry the rich used the labour of the poor without any kind of government control. The unemployed poor, protected only by a few old laws, were cared for mainly by private charity.

Now, however, a new and moral way of thinking slowly began to spread among people in positions of wealth and authority. Quietly but steadily more and more of them began to think about the value of their actions to society. Their public behaviour became influenced more and more by ideals and feelings.

The change had begun among a few people even before the younger Pitt came to power. James Oglethorpe, an army general, had been concerned at the misery of convicts and slaves. A nonconformist sheriff named John Howard had tried to see life in prisons such as the terrible Newgate, where Wesley preached. Josiah Wedgwood, the manufacturer of china plates and pots, had done much to improve the housing of his workmen.

Now, while Pitt steadily cleaned up the civil service and brought better order into government administration, these good works began to increase. The Methodists, Baptists and Quakers especially were active. A Yorkshire M.P. named William Wilberforce, a man whose human sympathies were guided by strong religious views, started a long struggle to end the slave trade. People became increasingly shocked when they

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith in his famous book, *The Wealth of Nations*, rightly called the English 'a nation governed by shop-keepers'.



heard about the conditions in which others, poorer than themselves, were living.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the worst conditions were at sea. England depended on the sea-trade of its merchant ships, but these were too often old and rotten. Seamen lived and worked for months together in surroundings which were damp, smelly, dirty, and full of rats. There were few cures for disease. On long voyages, many died from a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables.

It was known, even before the American war, that lime-juice prevents the disease called scurvy. Captain James Cook, the explorer of Australia and the south seas, had used it.

Cook had known also that only a clean ship, with clean men, escapes disease. He made his men wash the decks and open their living space between decks to the fresh air. His officers<sup>2</sup> learned the lesson and later demanded the same high standards from their crews. This was part of the navy's attempt to develop its power to fight effectively after many weeks at sea. Naval captains were iron-hard and the life of their press-ganged crews was terrible; but conditions in merchant ships were worse. Some passenger ships were worse than prisons.

Voyages for transported convicts were worst of all. The loss of the American colonies had meant that another place must be found for criminals condemned to transportation. The first ship-load of convicts for Australia was soon prepared. The men were tied with chains and packed together like slaves 'below decks', at the bottom of the ship. They and their guards were the first of many such ship-loads sent to the waste-land area of Botany Bay, near which the fine city of Sydney stands today.

Voyages for ordinary passengers were bad enough—endless days in a tiny wooden cabin that rocked like a barrel with the motion of the waves. With the growth of empire more and more people were traveling by sea. Pitt's government passed an India Act which was similar to Fox's proposed Act except that it succeeded in offending neither the nabobs nor the king. It gave Parliament some control over the East India Company, and allowed the government to appoint officials to

<sup>1</sup> Many were concerned equally about religious life. There was a growing wish to spread Protestant Christianity overseas. Several missions were started during the next few years, including the Church Missionary Society.

<sup>2</sup> Among them was William Bligh, who later faced mutiny on his ship, the *Bounty*.



India. The voyage east lasted six months or more, round the Cape of Good Hope, with much discomfort and danger from heat, storms, sickness and wreck.

The younger Pitt was not an empire-builder. Although there was a need to guard the trade routes with fleets and armies, Britain's second empire was started almost by accident. Pitt and his friends knew that trade brings most profit when it need not be defended by force.

Englishmen during Pitt's years of peace were much more concerned about the profits of trade than they were about the building of an empire. But the reformers were concerned also about the means by which the profits were obtained. When Warren Hastings—the East India Company's last governor-general—returned to England, he was accused of commercial greed. The reformers said that Company business was no excuse for attacking the rulers of Indian states, or for taxing the people of Bengal.

Hastings was impeached by Parliament. The attack against him was led by Burke,<sup>1</sup> in a trial which lasted for 7 years. Although Hastings was extremely rich, he spent all his money defending himself. When people at last lost interest, and Hastings was allowed to retire into private life, he was a broken man.

The trial split top society into those who supported Hastings and those who were against him. Soon after it began, the political world was also excited by another matter: the madness of the king.

The king had become mad before, as a young man; but he had got well again. This time it was worse. Poor George! He had been seen shaking hands with an oak-tree.

Fox demanded that the Prince of Wales be allowed to rule as regent during the illness of the king. Pitt delayed. Prince George meanwhile entertained his friends at Brooks's club with imitations of his father talking nonsense.

But within 3 months the king had luckily improved enough to see his ministers. Pitt and most of the top people were relieved. Fox and the prince had both behaved badly. Now they paid the price. Stones were thrown at their carriages as they passed.

Of course, great events such as the Hastings trial and Fox's downfall were of interest to only a small part of the nation. Outside London most of the population remained unaffected.

<sup>1</sup>It was joined by Fox and Sheridan, in support of Burke.



This was true particularly of northern England, where people lived without much thought of the world outside. In the valleys of the Lake District, the Peak district, Northumberland, Durham, and the wind-swept Yorkshire moors, they were far distant from national events. Their houses were scattered wide among the moors, distant generally even from each other. Lonely farmers sheltering with their families in stone houses from the wild winds, rain and snow, had no reason to care about the affairs of London and the south. The same was true of Cornwall in the extreme south-west.

Even nearer London, most villagers depended on no one but themselves. Although the sale of newspapers was growing, there were still many common people who could neither read nor write. Their days were full with ploughing, milking, weeding, harvesting, and the making and mending of the hundred things needed in farm and cottage. They baked their own bread, made their own butter and cheese, salted meat for the winter, wove their own cloth and sewed their own clothes.<sup>1</sup> They knew nothing of the growth of empire and overseas trade.

The roofs of their cottages were 'thatched' with local reeds or straw, or 'tiled' with local slates of stone or flat baked clay. The thick walls and low ceilings were made strong with local oak wood. The floors were local brick or stone.

The food and drink were local, even in the parson's house. The parson shot his own birds and caught his own fish. He fattened his own pigs and planted his own potatoes. He had fruit—apples, plums and pears—green vegetables and nuts. There was home-made beer to drink—and cider, which is made from apple-juice.

Only sugar was imported into the villages, together with tea. Drinking tea—sweet, with milk and sugar—was fast becoming a national habit. It was taken with bread and butter for breakfast, and again at about 4 o'clock. After evening dinner in rich houses, the ladies went to drink it in the drawing-room while the men stayed round the dining-table drinking wine. Usually the wine was 'port', from Portugal, because there was a heavy tax on French wines.

Both tea and wine were smuggled into the country in large quantities. Tobacco and strong drinks such as brandy, gin and rum were smuggled

<sup>1</sup> The poem 'The Village', by Burke's young friend George Crabbe, is a more exact picture of the village and its surroundings than that in Goldsmith's poem written 13 years earlier.



in too. Rum, made from sugar-cane juice in the West Indies, was popular particularly with seamen. The boxes and barrels, carried in carefully at night past sleeping coast-guards, were hidden or buried out of sight. Later they could be taken, over marshes and through the woods, to the waiting inns and manor-houses. When Pitt reduced the tax on tea and other goods, much of this trade was brought to an end.

Nobody likes paying taxes, and the more money a person has the more he will try to avoid it. When Pitt put a tax on windows, many people filled up their window-places with bricks. A lot of fine old Georgian houses were spoiled in this way, and some of the ugly new factory buildings became darker than they need have been. And when Pitt also taxed hair-powder, he changed the fashion. Ladies and gentlemen gradually stopped the habit of wearing powdered wigs, and increasingly showed their natural hair instead.

### *The factory towns*

Besides being prime minister, Pitt held the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor is responsible for financial affairs generally, including the work of the Treasury.

Pitt used the Treasury to build up the strength of the nation. Year after year he balanced government income against government expenses, thus developing the budgetary system. The result of this work was a great increase of public faith in the nation's finances.

England under Pitt became the first home of modern industry in the world. Pitt's policy was 'free trade'—that is, development free from interference by the government.<sup>1</sup> The island was not the only country with knowledge of inventions and machinery. Machines of various sorts had been invented in several countries of Europe. But conditions were ripe for their development only in England.

The first inventions had come early in the century, in the coal and iron industries. Coke made from coal produced more heat than charcoal, and the use of more heat made iron purer and fitter for bending. Then came an invention for melting iron with charcoal to make steel.

In the cotton industry a start had been made with a machine for weaving thread. This was followed by a machine for spinning thread.

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, which Pitt studied, said that merchants and manufacturers should be allowed to make profits unhindered by control. The wealth of the nation was the total wealth of its private citizens.



Then new and better machines were invented for both spinning and weaving. They were driven by water-mills at first, but later by steam-engines.

'Free trade' allowed manufacturers to make full use of these inventions. The capital they used came mainly from profits on land. At the end of the last chapter we saw how efficient land-owners revolutionized agriculture. A big part of their profits went into industry, either through banks or directly through the stock market. Thus the agricultural revolution in England largely financed the industrial revolution there.

Everything which the economists say is necessary for 'take off' was present: 'know-how', capital, and an increasing amount of suitable labour.

The labour also was there as a result of the improvements in agriculture. More and better crops meant cheaper and better food for the labouring population. Many had eggs and milk and meat on several days a week. Warmer and drier houses meant less illness from cold and damp. Cleaner streets in the towns meant fewer deaths from disease.

The movement from countryside to town was increasing. Forced out by the enclosures and attracted by the regular work offered by factory-owners, healthy men with wives and children filled every workhouse and private room.

Although the main mining areas were in south Wales, the huge coal- and iron-fields of the midlands and north of England were also being developed. Here the factories rose, and here thousands of countrymen from the south and east arrived for work.

Birmingham in the midlands became the centre for iron and engineering. Its population was about 70,000, and it was the first large town in which rates—that is, local taxes—were collected by the council to pay for social services. Local councils were formed in several other new towns also. With the rates they collected, they paid for such things as underground ditches to carry waste, lamps to light streets at night, and side-walks or pavements made of brick and stone.

Sheffield, with a population of nearly 30,000, was the home of steel. Like many other factory towns, it grew almost by accident. Nobody planned it, and nobody cared for it. The rows of workers' cottages multiplied like weeds.

Most of the northern towns remained surrounded by wild open moors and hills, or by fields and trees. Manchester was the biggest of these



towns. There were 80,000 people there. It was the centre for the little cotton towns of Lancashire and had several big solid brick buildings. Nevertheless, within a mile or two, there was still countryside.

Lancashire cotton-goods were becoming almost as important to the nation's economy as the great wool industry of Yorkshire. Much of the raw cotton now came from India, whose own cotton manufacturing industry was soon overcome by the competition. Men, women and their children worked in the Lancashire cotton mills for 13 or 14 hours a day.

'Free trade' allowed industrialists to make full use of labour. It gave them freedom to decide conditions of work and how much to pay. The conditions were cruel. The work-rooms were cold and bare like prisons. They were dark too, and the long working hours meant that during the winter months a worker never saw the day-time sky.

Even those with experience of the old kind of cottage industry found factory life hard and unfriendly. The old kind of employer had usually treated his workmen with understanding and sympathy. He had been close to them. Now, within the system of mass production, the factory-owner was like the top of a mountain—far distant up the economic and social scale.

Many people refused to work properly in these conditions, and some made trouble for the owners. But 'free trade' meant that the owners could then look for cheaper labour: children. A 10-year-old child was easier to control than an adult; and if he was employed as an apprentice, he need not be paid.

Many children never went to school.<sup>1</sup> Even very young boys and girls were often employed in family businesses. Now they were sometimes sold by their parents to the mines and factories.

Small boys had always been useful for sweeping chimneys, because they could climb through small holes. This was equally useful in a coal-mine. Now more and more mine-owners and factory-owners took pauper children from parish workhouses to work as apprentices, without pay.

The factory town was often a new sort of feudal estate. The owner lived like a baron. His castle was a mansion, a grand house well situated on a hill or in park-land near the town. The factory workers were his serfs. He owned their cottages and the local shops and ale-houses too.

<sup>1</sup> The poet William Blake, for example. He began life as a child apprentice.



The cottages were generally of a standard size—three rooms, for large families—and each had exactly the same appearance as the next. They were built cheaply in rows, or 'terraces'. Sometimes these terraces stood packed back-to-back, with no room for gardens or a green of any kind.

In most northern towns this ugly development was still slight, meaning perhaps a dozen humble streets round a tall factory chimney. The pottery area of Staffordshire was already becoming 'the Black Country', however. Smoke from a thousand coal fires hung low over the grey roofs. Its black dust came down and settled on trees and hedges for miles around.

The change from 'Merrie England' had begun, and it could not be stopped. It made men with imagination wonder where the world was going. Many were shocked. They turned to the wild beauty of nature for relief, or looked back to the past. Writers and artists rediscovered, in the romantic centuries of the middle ages, the importance of man as the chief of God's creatures. They found, in the legends of chivalrous love and war, the value of man as a human being. Above all, they found a mystery in both man and nature. Their curiosity was sharpened by this mystery in life, and their imagination was captured. It was no longer enough to be critical; it was no longer enough to be reasonable or logical; the spiritual qualities of man and nature demanded inquiry by the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the political reformers were romantics, too. They were disgusted by the ugliness, the greed and the cruelty of the time in which they lived. They were helpless, nevertheless. They could not protect the poor against the coming of machines.

'The people are the masters!' Burke cried. But they were not. In France the people had revolted and seemed now to be the masters. In England, however, no such revolution occurred. After a first shout of sympathy for the French revolutionaries,<sup>2</sup> the English reformers (who were mostly middle-class) began to disapprove strongly.<sup>3</sup>

Events in France had become more and more violent. The French king

<sup>1</sup> The Romantic Revival is the name given to the work of these writers and artists.

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish poet Robert Burns even bought and sent them 4 small cannons.

<sup>3</sup> But not the young poet Wordsworth, who was in France during the revolution. He kept his sympathy for many years. The most extreme reformer in England was the political writer, Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*. He became a French citizen.



and queen had been made prisoners in their own country. The red-capped republicans had beaten the armies of Austria and Prussia and had invaded Belgium. The extremist Girondins and Jacobins had taken power in a second bloody revolution. Now a 'reign of terror' had begun. Thousands of people had been executed, and their heads were held up for the crowds to see.

The English reformers were truly frightened. French noblemen had escaped to England, to settle there as *émigrés*, or refugees. They told terrible stories about the mad violence of the revolutionary crowds.

Among the English politicians only Fox, together with a few friends, continued to sympathize with the revolution. Most of the Whigs, led by the Duke of Portland, joined the Tories under Pitt. They were united against the common enemy, the French republicans, or *sans-culottes*, and they wanted war.

Pitt hesitated. War would put an end to his efforts to increase the nation's wealth. But the French republican armies were destroying the delicate balance of power which Pitt had tried to preserve in Europe; and now their red-capped soldiers on Belgium's coast threatened England's safety.

At last the problem was taken out of his hands. The Girondins executed their king and then declared war on England, Holland and Spain. Later that year the Jacobins took power and Robespierre became their leader. The executions continued.

In England, most people were proud of the society in which they lived. Their pride had roots in history. They lived freely under a king and a parliament of squires and merchants. They could not understand why 'the Frenchies', as they called them, did not want the same.

So, believing firmly that he was defending liberty, the ordinary Englishman went to war. It was a war fought by 10 million British, often without allies, against 27 million French. It was a war which lasted, with pauses, for over 20 years.

### *War against the French republic*

The French were much the strongest on land; so John Bull, his sleeves rolled up and his chest pushed out, went to sea.

A republican fleet was attacked by old Admiral Howe at Ushant, near its base port at Brest. The English ships were old and few, but they sank or captured 7 of the enemy. They arrived home in Portsmouth to scenes



of wild rejoicing. Even today, schoolboys know this battle as 'the Glorious First of June'.

Two months later, Robespierre and the Jacobins were dragged down. A young general, Bonaparte, gained control over the Paris streets. The French still hoped that a similar revolution would take place in Britain.

Why did the British working classes not revolt? There were Jacobins in England,<sup>1</sup> particularly in working men's clubs. They were put down by arrest and transportation. During the war, the right of trial under *habeas corpus* was taken away.

But few people in England were desperately poor and there was less unemployment than in France. The factory system, with all its hardships, had only just begun. The political system, although rotten and not truly democratic, nevertheless worked in a rough sort of way. The class system, although strict, did allow progress to young men with enough brains and courage to advance in it.

Above all, the strength of the family as a unit in society was like that of the Hindu joint-family in India today. It held the nation together in the face of the new political ideas.

Land, which was still the source of most wealth, was held by families rather than separately by persons; and it was guarded by the parents for their children. When young men married 'up' the social scale they brought more land under the family's control.

Most of the English gentry still lived on their estates. Their country houses were 'home', while their town houses were merely places of convenience, used in the months when Parliament was sitting and during the London 'season'. Most such gentlemen worked closely with their farmers, cowmen and shepherds for the improvement of both land and stock. They supported the economy of their districts by spending the rents they received among the tenant-families who paid them.

These brown-coated squires were the familiar leaders of local society. They worked as magistrates, J.P.s, governors of charities, masters of fox-hounds and even captains of cricket. They were enemies only to law-breakers such as poachers, footpads and vagabond gipsies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was also, a few years later, *The Anti-Jacobin*. This was a paper started to give the opposite, conservative, point of view.

<sup>2</sup> In some books gipsies are called Romanies, from the language they speak. Sometimes the word is spelt 'gypsies', because people believed they came from Egypt.



Indeed, the squire on his own soil was the protector of a huge group-family, sharing with his people their hardships and joys.

In the towns it was often the same. Masters treated their servants as part of their own family. Merchants often treated their apprentices and journeymen like their own sons.

Businesses were usually family businesses. Brothers and uncles and cousins all provided capital, so all had a common interest in success. In times of trouble, the richer members of a family supported the poorer ones.<sup>1</sup>

Successful people generally thought it their duty to care for those who were less successful. They gave money to charity homes, such as the alms-houses for old people, and to charity schools and hospitals.<sup>2</sup>

Thus most of society was held together by the strength of this feeling for the family. Only in London or some other big city could a person find himself alone.

The enclosures and the industrial revolution were affecting this situation increasingly, however. Many poor families, as we have seen, were breaking up. Husbands left their wives in search of work. Fathers sold their children to manufacturers or allowed them to be taken into parish workhouses. Sons and daughters left their parents. All of them were attracted by factory wages.

And now war had come. Now more wives and children lost the family breadwinner. The army offered any healthy man sixpence a day and the chance of robbing a defeated enemy. But it also offered the whip to rough peasants who found it hard to obey orders. A regiment was under the command of its colonel, who regarded it as his own property. He fed it, and clothed it, and demanded from it service which was almost feudal.

Many young gentlemen regarded the army as a business. They entered it as officers and they paid money for each higher rank as they gained it: lieutenant, captain, major, colonel and above. It was like a ladder for climbing the social scale.

There were few regular army camps in England. While the officers

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, an orphan at the age of 13, was in the care of relations. And even 30 years later the poet Coleridge was able to leave his family in the care of another writer, Robert Southey, his relation by marriage.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge and the writer Charles Lamb were both educated in a charity school when their parents could not support them.



lived in rented private houses, the common soldiers lived in ale-houses if they were lucky, although they were often treated like animals. Their officers neglected them and their sergeants beat them and swore at them. Sometimes they were whipped. They were the lowest of the low, and most of them could neither read nor write. They marked their names, on the paper recording their duty to His Majesty, with a dirty thumb-print or a X.

The press-ganged seamen too were poor and uneducated. Their homes were in the fishing villages or in the rat-run back-streets of the harbour towns. They 'signed on' at the beginning of a voyage and stood bare on deck while cold sea-water was thrown at them till they were clean.

There were several kinds of ship in the British navy, each with different firing-power, speed and size. The biggest warships were the 'ships of the line'. They had 70 cannon and more ranged along their decks, and they formed the main battle-line. Then there were 'frigates'. They were faster but had only 30–60 guns each. The 'brigs'—ships with two masts and square sails—were used mainly for scouting. The 'ketches', which were slower, were used mainly for throwing bombs. Small ships called 'schooners' carried messages and passengers quickly over long distances, while many of the big warships in a fleet carried 'cutters' and 'pinnaces'—little boats worked by oars and small sails—for shorter distances.

Any large fleet was commanded by an admiral, while a smaller one—a 'squadron'—was commanded by a commodore. A captain usually commanded a single ship-of-the-line with officers of lower rank to help him, while a commander might have a frigate, and a lieutenant a brig or a schooner.

Life on the big warships was hard. The men slept in 'hammocks', rope-beds hung at each end between decks. They were fed with salt meat and ship's biscuit full of insects called weevils. They went to work at the sharp sound of the boatswain's whistle.

The boatswain or 'bo'sun' was like a sergeant. He made sure that the crew properly performed the orders given by the ship's officers, and often he had a wooden club called a 'belaying-pin' to help him. Unwilling seamen were punished with the terrible 'cat-o'-nine-tails', a whip with nine knotted ends.

Seamen in the navy were never paid until the voyage was ended. In



time of war they hoped for 'prize-money', the reward for capturing enemy ships. This was shared according to rank, with the captain getting as much as all the ordinary seamen on his ship received together.

But prizes could be valuable. In the fourth year of the war the French were victorious in Europe, and Britain stood alone. The Spanish fleet, 39 large ships, was sailing to join the French fleet at Brest. The French plan was for the two fleets to sweep the Channel and then to take an army across to Ireland.

Admiral Sir John Jervis, with 15 ships, stopped the Spanish fleet near Cape St Vincent. In the fire and smoke of battle one of his officers, Commodore Horatio Nelson, succeeded in capturing two galleons which had become hooked together. Four galleons were taken altogether, and the victory resulted in more than prizes. Nelson was made an admiral and a knight.

Thanks to actions like this, the spirit of crews at sea was high.<sup>1</sup> The British were particularly proud of their navy, and have been so until today. They called the seaman 'Jack Tar', from the name of the flat black hats which seamen wore. 'Jack Tar' was a brave fellow, bold both at sea and with the girls on shore.

The seamen took their courage from the example set by their officers. Their officers shared the dangers of a hand-to-hand struggle and knew well how to fight with a naval sword, or 'cutlass'. Most officers went to sea as boys, with the rank of midshipman.

These boy midshipmen faced the same hardships as the crews. They too were expected to climb to the mast-head in a storm; and they were expected to stay there, pulling in sails, as the ship rocked and rolled and the cold wind tried to tear them away and the salt rain soaked them.<sup>2</sup>

There was plenty of excitement at sea; but in harbour, with the ships idle, the men had time to sit and think. At such times they thought not about their tough conditions but about their pay. Four years of war had meant a rise in prices which few seamen's families could afford.

Two months after the battle of Cape St Vincent, the Channel fleet

<sup>1</sup> These were the years of some of England's best sea-songs, or 'shanties'. Several were written by the dramatist Charles Dibdin. A fine one, 'Ye Mariners of England', was written by Thomas Campbell, a Scot.

<sup>2</sup> The writer Captain Frederick Marryat went to sea as a boy officer in this French war.



returned to port, to Spithead near Portsmouth. It was ordered to sail again two weeks later, this time to prevent the threatened invasion of Ireland.

But the men refused. They seized the guns and sent the officers on shore.

The mutiny spread to other ports. It spread to Plymouth, to Yarmouth and to the Nore, near Sheerness at the mouth of the Thames.

This was uncomfortably close to London. Pitt's government felt it necessary to condemn the leaders as rebels. When the mass of crews at last returned to duty, 29 of the mutinous leaders were hanged.

The trouble was over by the end of the year. At the battle of Camperdown, these same crews of the North Sea fleet captured 10 Dutch ships out of 17. The French lost the use of the Dutch navy for ever.

The struggle continued for Britain as a sea war. The policy of Pitt, like that of his great father in the earlier war, 40 years before, was to eat steadily at the commercial empires of France and its allies. Ceylon and Trinidad were captured. But 40,000 British soldiers died in unsuccessful attacks against the French sugar islands in the West Indies.

While attacking one of the Spanish-held Canary Islands, the bold and spirited Admiral Nelson lost his right arm. Already he had lost an eye in the service of his country.

In the following year Nelson was given command of a fleet in the Mediterranean. The French general Bonaparte, having conquered in Italy, now regarded the Mediterranean as a French lake. He captured Malta and conquered Egypt. From Alexandria and Cairo he hoped to make an eastern empire and perhaps march to India.

Nelson followed Bonaparte across the Mediterranean. After a long search he found the French fleet sheltering near the mouth of the Nile at Aboukir Bay. The British ships went in among the sand-banks on a hot August evening. The darkness was brightened by the flash of guns. When morning came, the greater part of the French fleet had been destroyed. Bonaparte in Cairo discovered that his life-line of supply was cut.

The battle of the Nile made the British masters of the Mediterranean. Bonaparte was forced to return to France secretly, while Nelson remained free to support the king of Naples in his opposition to the French. And here, in Naples, Nelson fell in love with the beautiful Lady Hamilton, wife of the British ambassador. She became his mistress.



Meanwhile, Malta was re-captured. British trade was started again with the Levant. A British army went to Egypt and forced defeat on the French soldiers whom Bonaparte had abandoned there.

The British interest in India, which Bonaparte regarded jealously, was also saved. The ruler of Mysore, whom the British believed was an ally of the French, was defeated at the walls of his capital city, Seringapatam. Then a tight-lipped, strong-jawed young man named Sir Arthur Wellesley went on to defeat the Maratha princes at the battle of Assaye. In 7 years the British empire in India was made.

A more immediate concern for England at that time was with a matter nearer home. Ireland was in trouble again. Protestants and Catholics had come together there in a common fight for liberty from English rule. One of the Irish leaders, Wolfe Tone, had turned to France for help. There had been French attempts at invasion, there had been bloody rebellion, and there had been cruelty and murder on all sides.

The Irish Catholics wanted complete independence. Pitt offered them the opposite: complete union. Union with Scotland had worked well, so why not union with Ireland? Also, union would lead to free trade between the two islands.

The Act of Union was passed. Irish M.P.s should now have gone to Westminster. But George III refused to allow Catholic members into the British parliament. Freedom of this kind for Catholics was, he said, against his coronation promise to defend the Protestant faith.

The old man was firm. No argument would move him; and he was strong, because the war had made him popular with his people. In times of danger the English usually feel a deep loyalty to the crown. Then they sing their national song, 'God save the King', more sincerely than at other times.

George knew the power of his popularity. Pitt, on the other hand, was tired and sick of war.

George used his strength. He arranged for a new ministry and forced Pitt to resign. Young 'Billy' Pitt, as the people called him—'Billy' being the friendly form of the name William—had been prime minister for 13 testing years. Now he was out of power.

The violence of this quarrel was too much even for the king. He had another attack of madness. People shook their heads sadly at the thought of rule by the Prince of Wales. But the prince himself and his Whig friends began to rub their hands in delight.



*Peace in war*

The war continued. France, defeated the Austrians at Hohenlinden, and Britain was again alone.

Taxes went on rising. Pitt had introduced an income-tax, the first ever known in England, to help pay for the war. Prices also were rising, especially the price of grain.

A British fleet sailed into the cold Baltic sea to protect supplies from Sweden and Russia. There was a threat that Denmark would join France. If that happened, the Danish navy would be at the service of the French.

So the British ships attacked the Copenhagen channel in which the Danish fleet was sheltered. Nelson was second-in-command. He took 12 ships into the channel, between sand-banks on one side and a castle thick with cannons on the other.

The water here was very shallow. The British admiral who was commanding saw 3 of Nelson's ships run aground. He ordered the remainder to retire.

The signal flags were set up accordingly on his ship, the flag-ship. But Nelson raised his telescope to his blind eye. 'I really do not see the signal,' he said. 'Keep my signal for closer battle still flying. Nail it to the mast.'

Smoke and the smell of burning gunpowder were everywhere. But Nelson could see that fires had been started in several of the Danish ships. The masts of others had been shot away. Some sank, one exploded, others ran aground.

The victory at Copenhagen belonged to Nelson. Thanks to his bold action the Danish navy was almost totally destroyed. Sweden and Russia, who might have joined Bonaparte, failed to do so. The Baltic remained open to British trade.

Then peace came. The new prime minister, Addington, made a treaty with the French. This treaty gave Britain much relief, although it lasted only for a year.

People were determined to enjoy this time of peace. Many curious gentlemen journeyed down the Dover road, crossed the Channel and went to Paris. They wanted to look at the famous Bonaparte, whom they rudely called 'Boney'.

Others preferred to have their holidays at home. They took their coaches into the countryside and spent the time enjoying their estates.



They found plenty to attend to. Rich men for many years had been employing special artists to improve their country estates. These artists were called 'land-scape' gardeners, and their work was to lay out splendid new gardens in a manner which would delight the eye.

Many land-scape gardeners admired particularly the work done at Kew palace by the river Thames, about 10 miles south-west of London. Kew Gardens, as they are called, present the beauties of natural scenery in picture-like fashion. There are large areas of close-cut grass extending into green slopes, with great trees standing singly or in careful groups, so that nearly every view presents a romantic picture. Kew Gardens are the most famous of the examples of land-scaping which still exist in England today.

Increasingly land-owners copied this fashion. Many built their mansions on the sides of hills, so that these park-like gardens were spread out romantically below them.<sup>1</sup>

Often the houses had full-length 'French' windows, with opening glass doors, to improve the view. In spring and summer these rich people could walk out through the French windows on to a stone terrace, then down wandering paths, past groups of flowering bushes, and over little bridges and clear streams; and at last perhaps arrive at a pretty garden hut set by a lake or on a river bank.

Some houses had 'conservatories' fixed to their walls. Conservatories were glass-houses, kept warm inside for the growth of tender flowers and plants in pots.

At the back of the house there was often a walled-in vegetable garden. And at the side of the house there was sometimes another walled garden, the rose garden. Besides roses, other flowers too were grown for cutting and carrying indoors, to freshen the inside of the house.

The cultivation of fine flowers and vegetables was regarded as an amusing and healthy exercise. Indeed, gardening was often considered much too pleasurable to be left to servants. Many squires and their wives enjoyed working long hours at their flower-beds, especially during spring-time evenings, when the air is soft and cool and a dozen different birds fill it with their sweet song.

Life was very busy for the squire and his lady. While the squire managed his estate and visited his tenants, his wife managed the house

<sup>1</sup> These imaginative land-scaped gardens became popular at the same time as the Romantic Revival in poetry.



and the indoor servants. She organized the duties of the 'butler' and 'footmen' who served in the dining-room and sitting-rooms. She gave orders to the woman housekeeper and to the 'chamber-maids' who worked in the bedrooms upstairs. These servants slept in small rooms at the top of the house and ate together in the servants' hall which was at the bottom, below the stairs.

Sometimes the squire's lady went out in the family gig, perhaps on charity work to one of the local farms. There she might be greeted by the farmer's red-faced wife in a large clean kitchen. She might be given a cup of tea and stand drinking it among the bags of beans and grain stored there and under the hooks of smoked and salted meat which hung from the ceiling.

There were old-fashioned squires and new squires, as we have seen, and the old squires were generally more popular with their tenants. While some families had held the land for centuries, the new squires were a different class. They were factory-owners and businessmen who had grown rich quickly and perhaps had profited from the enclosures. Towns-people have never been popular in the English countryside; and the 'new rich' have never been popular in any society. The more these self-made men tried to imitate the old squires, the more they were disliked. The greatest interest of most of them remained their life in town.

Travel between town and country was increasing, thanks to the good turnpike roads and improved stage-coach services. Often the owner of a country house gave parties lasting several days for his London friends. The rich ones arrived with their personal servants; the gentlemen with 'valets', and the ladies with 'maids'. These servants joined the household servants 'below stairs'.

The guests were entertained in several ways. There were dances and balls. Out of doors there were 'picnics'—that is, tea and games on the grass, under a blue sky. In summer too there were rides on horseback or in the gig into the countryside, along the dusty tracks between the hedge-rows and the ripening corn.

Often, during the war against 'Boney', the guests were naval or army officers. Sometimes they were fine young men, splendid in blue and red tight-fitting coats and trousers and with shining black boots. Their hair curled round the sides of their faces and their skin was fresh and lightly browned by the sun. Such guests were good company, and the 'beaus'



among them were welcomed especially by the daughters<sup>1</sup> of the house.

These pale-faced young ladies generally lived rather dull lives. They dressed plainly, with long straight skirts, and wore little bonnets covering their hair. They sewed, or read, or practised music, or wrote letters to their friends during days when it rained or when snow and ice lay thick outside. A tea-party was a great occasion for them. A visit with the family to town was an even greater excitement in their lives.

Young ladies of the middle class began to read more and more widely. They read the Bible of course, but increasingly they also read sixpenny novels and penny papers with stories about romantic heroes and helpless and innocent young girls.

The number of lending libraries increased. Booksellers enjoyed a growing trade. Popular novelists, several of them women, wrote for a mass market. Some of them wrote 'romances' about knights in shining armour, ruined castles, wicked barons, terror, darkness and death.<sup>2</sup> These tales were often illustrated boldly in black and white.

But the basis of most ideas was still religious. Tracts were printed, pointing the way to good, moral behaviour in life.<sup>3</sup> The middle classes opened 'Sunday schools', where labouring children could go after the week's work. Sunday school taught children the ways of God, and it kept them off the streets.

The result of wider education was that more working people joined the lower middle classes. There were now skilled journeymen, clerks and shopkeepers in almost every little town. Girls also went to school in growing numbers. That meant thousands of women able to write long letters full not only of news but of ideas and descriptions too.

Education raised the standard of living. Those who had learned to read and write no longer wanted to do difficult work with their hands. So the special crafts-men of the villages—the leather-makers, the wood-workers, the spinners and the weavers—began to disappear. The village was no longer self-supporting.

Instead there was the village shop, stocked with goods imported from

<sup>1</sup> Families were often large, even in middle-class homes. The novelist Jane Austen, for example, had a sister and 5 brothers. Two of them became admirals in the navy.

<sup>2</sup> These romances prepared the way for the novels of Sir Walter Scott.

<sup>3</sup> The British and Foreign Bible Society was started at this time.



the cities and the factory towns, and served by commercial travellers called 'bagmen'. The village shop became important socially, besides developing the economy of the village. It became a social meeting-place for the local women, as the ale-house or 'pub' was already for the men.

The village shop could not stock everything, however. The regular market fairs in the country towns remained. Here the country people bought their food stores for the year. Here also, housewives traded with 'pedlars' or 'pack-men'. These pedlars were often gipsies, pulling pack-horses laden with dozens of useful things: pins, needles, scissors and knives, rope, ribbons, cloth and clothes-pegs, soap, medicines and cheap toys.

Fairs continued to be places of entertainment too. For a few pennies the wondering villagers could see actors on the stage, Punch and Judy,<sup>1</sup> fat men and bearded women, fire-eaters, dancing dogs, and wild animals from Africa and the East.

But not everybody was merry. Rising prices hit poor people very hard. Wages were often less than 10 shillings a week, much below the cost of living.<sup>2</sup> Bread alone cost over a shilling a week for most families.

Something must be done. A few local councils began to pay money out of the parish rates. This money, or 'dole', was intended to reduce the gap between wages and the cost of living. Its effect was that employers began to pay even lower wages, because they could now depend on the dole keeping their workers alive.

The dole has been called many names in English history: 'poor relief, for example, or 'public charity', or 'national assistance'. For poor people in both town and country it is, like alms, a shameful thing.

Factory wages were even lower than farming wages. And the factory towns were not like the market towns. There were no market-places or fair-grounds, no town-halls or churches, no good inns or theatres,

<sup>1</sup> Punch and Judy are puppets, dolls worked with the performer's hands. The drama show in which they are the main characters developed from a mixing of Italian comedy with the old English 'morality' plays.

<sup>2</sup> The economist Thomas Malthus believed that the population was increasing more rapidly than the supply of food and natural wealth. Another thinker, Jeremy Bentham, called for help for the weak and poor. He believed in 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.



Their days were filled with dirt and the grinding of machines. They began to speak increasingly badly, through their noses, pronouncing words carelessly with hard thin voices.<sup>1</sup>

Everything they heard and saw was ugly. Many went overseas—to America, Canada and Australia—anywhere rather than continue in the black and smoky back streets of the factory towns.

The political reformers, who were called ‘radicals’ now, were weak and disorganized. Burke was dead. Fox was soon to die. Parliament was full of land-owners and rich merchants who were unsympathetic to the working class.

England was again on the edge of war with France. It was dangerous to be radical. Many people in the ruling class regarded radicals as like French Jacobins; and they feared Jacobins as much as people in some countries fear communists today.

Although a few radicals still sympathized with the Jacobins, most people were firmly against France under Bonaparte.<sup>2</sup> That great man was now known as Napoleon, and soon he would be emperor.

### *War against Napoleon Bonaparte*

Addington, compared with Pitt, was a weak prime minister. He was certainly not the right man to lead a country to victory against Napoleon. Soon after the beginning of this second part of the war, Addington resigned. Pitt then became prime minister again.

Meanwhile Napoleon had gathered an army at the French channel port of Boulogne. He planned a direct invasion of England. He was building boats to carry his soldiers and was trying to collect warships to protect them. He had dragged Spain and Holland into the war for this purpose.

But the British navy had no intention of allowing enemy ships into the Channel. Admiral Jervis told the House of Lords: ‘I do not say that the French cannot come. I only say they cannot come *by sea*.’

These were brave words; but Englishmen were anxious, nevertheless. The militia practised with their muskets on village greens and in city parks and squares. Citizens armed themselves with pikes; countrymen with hay-forks and axes. Look-out towers were built along the cliffs

<sup>1</sup> This habit grew, until today many African and Asian visitors discover that they speak purer English than the British working class.

<sup>2</sup> Although many admired him, such as the radical writer William Hazlitt.



of southern England. Mothers warned children that Boney would come and get them if they were not good.

The islanders waited month after month. In summer calm and winter storm the Channel fleet kept watch. Tall battleships, the 'ships of the line', beat hard against Atlantic winds. The smaller but faster frigates spent endless days and nights rising and dipping, rolling and twisting through angry, curling waves. On the salt-swept quarter-decks—the raised part of the deck at the back of a ship—blue-coated officers stood during their four-hour watches. But there was no sign of movement along the French coast.

Napoleon would not risk his ships in battle, and the British would not allow him a clear crossing. At last the emperor grew tired of waiting. He abandoned his invasion plans, retired from the camp at Boulogne, and marched his army away across Europe, against his other enemy, the Austrians.

The immediate danger was past; but the British remained determined to destroy the French and Spanish navies, or as much of them as possible.

Nelson followed a French fleet to the West Indies, and back again, failing to find it. He now sailed south, hoping to catch both navies at Cadiz.

The flag-ship of Admiral Nelson's fleet was the *Victory*, a three-decker battleship with 104 guns and a huge spread of sail. This great ship was commanded by Captain Hardy.

An admiral was responsible for all his ships equally. From the quarter-deck of the flag-ship the admiral's signals directed all his other 'men of war', as warships were called, into line of battle.

The enemy was sighted near Cape Trafalgar, about 30 miles south of Cadiz. The French and Spanish ships had been aiming at Gibraltar. Now they turned northwards again, back towards Cadiz. There were 33 ships of the line with 5 frigates, all spread out over 5 miles of water in an uneven curved line.

Nelson had 27 ships of the line and 4 frigates. He formed them into two straight lines, with the *Victory* leading the northern line.

It was a clear morning, with only a soft wind curling the surface of the green-blue sea.

Nelson signalled to his captains: 'England expects that every man will do his duty.' He was going to attack the enemy from the side, with the wind behind him.



As the leading British ships crashed into the enemy line, each captain locked his ship against one of the enemy. Hardy's ship, with Nelson on the quarter-deck, fought a duel with 1 Spanish and 3 French ships. While the cannons thundered and smoked, mouth against mouth, bombs and bullets swept the decks of the *Victory* from the masts of the enemy ships. Suddenly Hardy saw the admiral go down on his knees. 'My back-bone is shot through,' Nelson said.

The little, one-armed, one-eyed man, the hero of England, was carried down below deck. Blood was everywhere. The ship's doctor went to him and saw that he was dying. For three hours he lay there, and during this time his ships finished their work. The enemy fleets were broken and scattered, leaving 20 ships captured or sunk. No British ships were lost.

Although the victory was complete, few of the British crews wanted to cheer. Hardy had held Nelson in his arms and kissed him on the cheek. Now the great man's powers of leadership, his charm, his magic—'the Nelson touch'—all were gone. People in England stopped in the streets, when they heard the news, and cried.

The body was carried in the *Victory* back to Spithead. It was taken up the Thames to Greenwich and Whitehall, and at last it arrived for burial at St Paul's Cathedral in the City. Thirty years later a great square was laid out in central London. It was named Trafalgar Square, and Nelson's Monument was built in the middle of it.

Trafalgar was the last great battle fought by sailing ships. After that, the story of England's part in the Napoleonic wars is the story of attacks by land.

Napoleon defeated Britain's allies, Austria and Russia, at the battle of Austerlitz. Britain was alone again. It was a terrible disappointment for Pitt.

That hard-worked man was in despair. 'Roll up the map of Europe,' he said. 'It will not be needed these 10 years.' Nobody seemed able to beat Napoleon on land.

Although Pitt had been a great leader in time of peace, he lacked the strength of mind to win at war. And he never properly understood the fine spirit of the revolutionary French people. Now his health began to crack under the weight of responsibility and worry. The doctors could do nothing as the prime minister, who was still only 46, sank into serious illness.

Pitt's last words, on the night he died, were: 'Oh, my country! How



I leave my country!’ He had led English politics for 23 years. Now, in the face of fresh danger from Napoleon, the people did not know where to turn. A coalition ministry ‘of all the talents’—filled with the best remaining men—was formed.

This ministry was, in fact, mainly Whig. It passed an Act which ended Britain’s part in the slave trade; but it did nothing to win the war.

After a year it was replaced by a mainly Tory ministry under the Duke of Portland. The two boldest men in this ministry were both young: Canning, the foreign secretary, and Castlereagh, the secretary of state for war. They were Pitt’s pupils, and they did not waste time. Armies were sent to Denmark and Gibraltar. In south America, the British had recently suffered, a bad defeat at Buenos Aires. Now it was decided to send another army there.

This plan was changed, however, when the main British war effort moved to Spain.

Napoleon had placed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the Spanish throne. A French army had invaded Portugal. The people of Spain and Portugal were soon resisting.

Portugal was Britain’s oldest ally and best European friend. If Britain could place an army in Portugal, it could strike against Bonaparte in Spain.

Thus a small British army soon appeared near Lisbon. One of the generals in command was Sir John Moore.

Moore was a man with very forward-looking views on the skills of war. Some years earlier he had developed a light brigade of riflemen—three regiments of soldiers armed with a new weapon which shot bullets through a ‘rifled’ or grooved barrel. Old-fashioned infantrymen—the ordinary red-coated fusiliers with their smooth-barrelled muskets—went into battle shoulder to shoulder, standing or advancing in a straight line. Moore’s riflemen were clothed in green, the colour of trees and bushes. Their skill was to move quickly from one firing position to another, as is done in modern war.

Moore himself had fought in Corsica, the West Indies, Holland and Egypt. He was the complete soldier—upright, well-built, straight in character, full of courage—and he was much respected by his men.

Moore’s army entered Spain with the purpose of helping the Spanish people. But Napoleon was pouring his regiments over the Pyrenees and



soon was master of the whole of north-east Spain. Spanish resistance ended within a few weeks. Napoleon sat in Madrid.

Faced by 10 French soldiers to every one of his own, Moore was forced to retire. But his line of communication with Portugal was cut. He must get his men away by sea from Corunna, at the north-west corner of Spain.

It was winter. The roads were rivers of mud. Already his soldiers had marched hundreds of miles. Now, with the French pressing closely behind them, they must hasten another 250 miles over mountains, and through rain and snow, to the sea.

The riflemen, in front when advancing, now protected the long lines of struggling soldiers from behind. They were the 'rear-guard'. Again and again they beat back the forward parties of French cavalry. But again and again men fell to the ground, beaten not only by shot and sword but by fever, hunger and lack of sleep.

At last Moore's tired soldiers reached the town of Corunna. They looked for the ships which Moore had urged the government to send to take them home.

Only some of the ships were in the harbour. The others had been delayed by storms at sea.

A final battle could not be avoided now. The French were very near. Moore turned, like a cornered lion. As the French cannons thundered from the mountain-tops, the French cavalry and infantry came pouring down the hills towards the little town. In many places they were met by groups of green-clothed riflemen, who rose up out of the ground with bayonets fixed to their rifles. In other places they were stopped by Moore's cavalry, and were forced to turn back.

The spirited defence of these desperate men held the enemy away till night. Then the mass of them moved down towards the harbour, where the last of the ships had arrived to make the fleet complete.

The army left its general behind, however. A cannon-ball had struck Moore from his horse at the moment of victory. He had fallen fatally wounded; and he was buried in the soil of the land he had come to save.

The British now regarded Napoleon as a sort of devil. And they did not consider their own government, who allowed such things to happen, as very much better. Particularly, they blamed their war minister, Viscount Castlereagh.

Lisbon remained in British hands, nevertheless; and a new army under



Sir Arthur Wellesley was soon active in the rest of Portugal. He was the general who had been successful in India 5 years earlier.

Six months after Moore's battle at Corunna, Wellesley took his army into Spain. He had 20,000 men. Although most of them were without experience,<sup>1</sup> they included 2,000 of the best foot-soldiers called 'Guards'.

The Guards are the back-bone of any British army. At the battle of Talavera, about 70 miles from Madrid, they allowed the French to advance almost to bayonet point. Then they fired all together, at the same time, in a 'volley'. Then they charged.

Action of this kind is considered glorious by the British people. All the guns of the Tower of London were fired to mark the news of victory at Talavera.

Soon, however, there was news of a sadder kind. It was news which showed another side of the British military effort. Castlereagh, as secretary for war, was responsible officially for an attack that same summer on the Dutch island of Walcheren. The aim was to destroy Napoleon's naval bases near Antwerp; but everything went wrong from the start. Men were landed in the wrong places. Gun-boats and bomb-ketches failed to destroy the French forts. Army and navy commanders quarrelled with each other, while thousands of soldiers and seamen died from fever and neglect.

Canning, the foreign secretary, wanted to become prime minister in place of the ageing Portland. Now he blamed his rival, Castlereagh, for this defeat. He demanded publicly that Castlereagh resign. The two quarrelled. They fought a duel with pistols. The Portland ministry collapsed in anger and confusion.

The chancellor of the exchequer, a quiet little man named Spencer Perceval, then agreed to form a government. Perceval was a Tory, and he was determined that the war must go on. Wellesley's brother was made foreign secretary; and Wellesley himself, who had been made Lord Wellington, was told to hold his position in Portugal.

Wellington, as we must now call that famous soldier, had built strong lines of defence at Torres Vedras, not far from his Lisbon base. In the year after Talavera, Wellington retired to that little corner of land. He must now nurse the last British army in Europe until he could use it to drive the French armies altogether out of Spain.

<sup>1</sup> The young writer W. S. Landor fought in Spain.



*The end of the war*

There was trouble at home. The Tory government was opposed not only by the Whigs but by the heir to the throne. Prince George was nearly 50 now. For years he had been the centre of an idle, talkative, hard-drinking, fashion-loving group of ladies and gentlemen. They were known as the Carlton House group, from the name of Prince George's London palace.

George considered himself the leader of the fashionable world and loved to hear himself called 'the first gentleman of Europe'. He surrounded himself with beautiful things and beautiful people. One of his best friends was the dandy 'Beau' Brummell, a fine young man who delighted in splendid clothes and manners. Another person with influence over the prince was Mrs Fitzherbert, a lady whom George had married secretly after the death of her first husband. Although George had also married a princess, Caroline, who was chosen by the king his father, he soon became tired of her. He took mistresses from the court, and at last he returned to Mrs Fitzherbert.

Although 'Prinny', as Prince George was called by his courtier-friends, was popular at Carlton House, he was not popular with the people. When clouds of madness again covered the mind of the old king, few were happy at the idea of George as regent. Only his Whig friends now saw their chance of taking power.

But George, at this moment for which they had been waiting so long, suddenly and surprisingly abandoned his Whig friends.<sup>1</sup> He accepted Perceval's conditions for the regency and agreed to keep his father's advisers.

And Prince George's first public act as regent provided for continuation of the war in Spain.

A month later, Wellington began to advance. Two months later, he had freed Portugal and entered Spain. By his patience he had proved a great thing: that Napoleon's armies could, with determination, be stopped and then forced back.<sup>2</sup>

However, other things besides determination prevented Napoleon from conquering the British. The islanders had certain advantages. They had sea-power, which meant they could attack the French overseas

<sup>1</sup> The Irish poet Thomas Moore was a Whig supporter at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Walter Scott called Wellington 'our Nelson on land'.



possessions wherever they wished, and support Wellington's army in Spain too. And they had industrial power, which meant they could make huge quantities of the supplies necessary for war.

The industrial revolution was gaining strength all the time. But with it the situation of the workers became worse. Hand-workers were losing their jobs to the new mechanics; and in the midlands they rioted, wrecking the machines. The rebels, who formed themselves together in secret groups, sent out public letters stating their demands. They signed these with the name 'Ned Ludd'.

The rebels became known as 'Luddites', and their movement spread quickly to the woollen-cloth workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The government threatened death to the Luddite leaders, but the troubles continued for several years.

In the second year of the Luddite riots, the prime minister, Spencer Perceval, was killed by a madman in front of the House of Commons. The prince regent then tried to bring some Whigs into the government, but he failed. He accepted instead a Tory ministry under Lord Liverpool, with Lord Castlereagh as its foreign secretary.

Immediately this new government was faced with a different trouble: America declared war and tried to invade Canada. American settlers, faced by Indians in the west, were turning north to build their homes.

British armies went into America from Canada and by sea. They captured Detroit, burned Washington, and unsuccessfully attacked New Orleans. There were several duels between American and British frigates at sea.

In Spain, meanwhile, Wellington had driven Joseph Bonaparte out of Madrid. Side by side with the Portuguese and Spanish, the British regiments added fresh honours to their flags: Badajoz, Salamanca, Vitoria, Toulouse. Every regiment had a flag, its 'colours', which it carried into battle; and each regiment which performed well in one of these battles sewed its name on to the regimental colours.

The victory at Toulouse was the last of the war. Napoleon, having lost a whole army in the snowy wastes of Russia, was in fact already defeated. The net around him had closed. The allies—Britain, Russia, Prussia and the Austrians—were soon in Paris. Napoleon was sent to the island of Elba near Italy. The war was finished.

Wellington was made a duke. He returned to England and was given a welcome fit for a hero. In British history he is known as 'the Iron Duke';



and certainly his tall straight body, deep-set eyes and strong jaw-line made him appear like a man of iron. His soldiers, however, preferred to call him 'Old Nosey', because his most famous distinguishing mark was his great bony nose.<sup>1</sup>

The society which greeted the famous soldier was a society ruled by the prince regent. The old king George III was still alive, but going blind and deaf. Unhappily for his son, he would not die.

Prince George was growing old and fat. He was separated from his wife, the princess Caroline, and generally he behaved badly to all his family.<sup>2</sup> He lived only for pleasure, surrounding himself with ornaments and riches.

Luckily, nevertheless, the prince regent was a man who liked good art. He employed the fine artist John Nash to improve the West End of London, in which Carlton House was situated. He gave Nash the work of planning a great broad street, Regent Street, to run from St James's Park northwards through Piccadilly to a grand new park, Regent's Park, which Nash was laying out in the land-scape fashion.

The prince regent also developed the sea-side town of Brighton on the Sussex coast, which was his favourite spa. There he built a palace called the Brighton Pavilion, where he regularly held dinners and balls.

The beaus or dandies of the prince regent's court led the fashion in many things. They wore 'top hats'—tall like chimneys—high collars, cut-away black coats and long white trousers. The ladies wore fine cotton dresses, low at the neck and showing the ankles. And because there was no room for pockets in these tight dresses, they began to carry hand-bags.

Rich men filled their grand houses with shining delicate furniture made in what is now called the 'Regency style'. Patterned curtains and wall-paper, coloured prints and bright silk hangings, brightened all the rooms. Fine china and silver lay in glass-fronted cupboards. 'Dinner', eaten early in the evening, was served from silver trays.

Ladies and gentlemen talked for hour after hour. Conversation was an art; and as they talked they waved their gloves and fans. They gambled on everything: cards, dice, horse-racing and cricket. Lord's cricket

<sup>1</sup> A sure sign of fame in England is the inn-sign. There are many pubs named 'the Wellington' and 'the Duke's Head' still existing today.

<sup>2</sup> The radical writer Leigh Hunt was put into prison for criticizing the regent's behaviour.



ground had just been opened at St John's Wood in London, where it is today.

The gentlemen, the beaux, declared their love for the ladies in a polished and graceful manner. The ladies pretended confusion and smiled prettily from behind their fans.<sup>1</sup>

In the ball-rooms, the gentlemen kept cards to record the names of the ladies whom they had invited to dance. There were various sorts of dance: gavottes, quadrilles, the Roger de Coverley, the galop and (most popular of all) a newly introduced dance called the waltz.

But there was more to the Regency years than dandyism, love-making and dancing. Some of the great London houses, such as Holland House, the home of a great Whig family, were centres of art, poetry, learning and politics. In the clubs, too, serious men with serious opinions met and discussed the great affairs of the day.

And the greatest problem in the months following the defeat of Napoleon was: what to do about France?

### *Napoleon's 'hundred days'*

The victorious allies had met at Vienna to plan Europe's future. Britain was represented at this famous meeting first by Viscount Castlereagh, the foreign secretary, and later by the Duke of Wellington.

While Wellington was at Vienna, news arrived of Napoleon's escape from Elba.

The duke was a man with a clear brain and good common sense. He knew that Napoleon could be defeated only by the allies together. He agreed to command an army which was part British and part Dutch, Belgian and German. This army was based in Belgium, looking south towards France and working in line with an allied army of Prussians under Marshal Blücher on its left-hand side.

Wellington went quickly from Vienna to Brussels. There he spent the next two months organizing his army and preparing to defend Belgium from the French. The Belgian capital city, Brussels, was a good place for Napoleon to strike at; because he could throw the whole weight of his armies at Austria and Russia again, if he could destroy the British and the Prussians first.

There were many English families on holiday in Brussels at that time.

<sup>1</sup> These were the years when Lord Byron was the popular hero of fashionable society.



Some of them were living there. Many now departed, and those who remained became worried and fearful. Young army officers appeared in increasing numbers at dinner parties, dances and balls; and they were a comfort to the young ladies. They appeared splendid in their best clothes, and they were calm and controlled, as though they had no care in the world.

But they all knew that the storm was coming. One summer evening there was a ball which the Duke of Wellington attended. Messengers came in with secret news. Wellington gave his orders quickly.

The French were gathering in masses. They had attacked the Prussians. The duke sent a brigade to guard the Paris-Brussels road at the village of Quatre Bras, about 25 miles south of the Belgian city. Blücher's army was around Ligny, a few miles to the east.

When Wellington arrived at Quatre Bras, the action had already started. French cavalry had pressed in from a front line which extended across 2 miles of land.

Napoleon's main effort at this moment was not against Wellington, however; it was against Blücher. He pinned the Prussians down firmly at Ligny, before turning the main part of his force against Wellington's mixed army.

The Prussians retired back north from Ligny, and Wellington was forced to move back too. Nearly 10 miles behind him, back towards Brussels, there was some rising ground which protected the village of Waterloo. Gradually, in heavy rain, the British army retired towards this area of defence. A few farms stood among the lower slopes. These were fortified.

At the battle of Waterloo, which now followed, Napoleon's army consisted of about 75,000 men with 220 heavy guns. Wellington had about 65,000, with 150 heavy guns. Soldiers on both sides slept out in the open during the night before the battle. There were thunder-storms and thick, driving rain. The low ground in the morning was soft with mud.

Napoleon began his attack by advancing towards the two main farms, Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. His soldiers fought fiercely but could not capture them.

These two strong-points were some way distant from each other, and Napoleon soon threw a huge cavalry attack through the space between them: The horses went steadily up the slopes until it seemed that they



must overcome the main British army. Some of the Hanoverians in it rode away from the attack and told people in Brussels that Wellington was defeated already. This news caused great confusion in the capital.

In fact, however, the British line had held the attack. The infantry was formed into squares, each square being four ranks deep. The first two ranks were kneeling or bending, with bayonets fixed. The second two ranks, standing, shot their muskets together, in a volley. Again and again the bullets struck Frenchmen from their horses and prevented others from getting near the squares.

Napoleon's cavalry could not break the squares. During that long summer's afternoon several great cavalry attacks were driven back. Sometimes groups of horsemen went between and behind the British positions, but then they were shot down from the ranks in the side and back faces of the squares.

Sometimes 10,000 horsemen were in action together. In many places the horses were knee-deep in mud. Great heaps of dead men and horses grew up around the squares. Cannon-balls came crashing over them. But still the lines of British infantry-men did not break.

As evening came, thousands of French infantry moved against the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte. The defenders shot at them through wall-holes and windows until they had used all their bullets. Then they fought with bayonets, as the French burst into the courtyard and broke down the doors.

Wellington's army now was reduced to about 35,000 men. The lower parts of the battlefield were filled with smoke. All that afternoon the duke on his great horse had been wherever the fighting was thickest. Now he was on the top of a slight hill overlooking the Hougoumont farmhouse. He could see, coming through the smoke, past the farmhouse and towards his main line, the greatest threat to his position that Napoleon had yet made: the best regiments in the emperor's army, the Imperial Guard.

Slowly, but in a great mass, these splendid soldiers came up the slope. They were men with great experience, steady and unafraid. They were moving straight towards Wellington's main line of British Guards.

The British Guards lay waiting, red coats in the brown mud. Then, just as the French front ranks reached the top of the slope, almost to bayonet point, the duke's voice roared: 'Up, Guards! Make ready! Fire!'

The volleys crashed out, the mass hesitated, and then came on again.



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The two sides were locked together, the best of the British with the best of the French. Men were falling on both sides, but the British fire-power was greater. Soon the Imperial Guard, the cream of the emperor's army, were beginning to drop back down the slope.

The duke waved his hat. The whole British army began to move forwards. The French were abandoning the battlefield.

Wellington was now joined by Blücher, who had brought his Prussians round by side roads from Ligny in support. The two men greeted each other on horseback. In the late evening of the greatest day in the history of war in Europe, they knew that victory was theirs.

Napoleon had fought his last battle. Waterloo was his worst defeat. One hundred days after his coming from Elba, he was a refugee. He escaped to the sea coast but there was taken prisoner on to a British ship. Lord Liverpool's government decided to send him far away into the south Atlantic, to the island of St Helena.

With the fighting finished, the British soldiers went home. They had won a war against a nation more than twice as large as their own. Some of them had never known more than a year of peace in all their lives. Now they wanted nothing more than freedom to follow their own trades and to earn a share in the wealth of their victorious island.

But there were some shocks waiting for most of them, as we shall see.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 7

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
1761-70				
George III (1760-1820)	Maria Theresa Rousseau	British in Gambia	Suraj-ud-Daula Madhava Rao	Cook sees Australia and New Zealand
1771-80				
Lord North	Louis XVI Goya	Osei Kwadwo	Phaya Tak Siu Hyder Ali	George Washington Tupac Amaru
1781-90				
Lord Rockingham	Catherine the Great	Gazi Hasan Freetown	Phaya Chakri Raja Haji	Tiradentes American constitution
Lord Shelburne	Mozart			
1791-1800				
Pitt, the younger	Robespierre Kant	Uthman dan Fodio	Tipu Sahib Salim III	British in Australia Thomas Jefferson
1801-10				
Addington Duke of Portland	Napoleon Goethe	Mungo Park Ahmadu Lobo	Ranjit Singh British in Ceylon	J.-J. Dessalines Francisco de Miranda
1811-15				
Perceval Lord Liverpool	Metternich Beethoven	Dingiswayo Osei Bonsu	British in Singapore	British in Guyana and Mauritius



## *The Rich and the Poor*

### *After the war*

There was not enough work. Thousands of soldiers and seamen were in the streets, looking for employment.

The population was nearly 12 million now. More than half of it still lived on the land, but that land now was enclosed with ditches, hedges, fences and low stone walls.<sup>1</sup> The countryman had lost his right to feed a cow upon the common.

The countryside was still beautiful, but it was a hard place in which to live. While the artists Turner and Constable painted sunlight and the lovely fields and trees, many countrymen nearly starved. They had not much more than bread and cheese and the few vegetables which they grew in their small gardens.

The cost of bread was high. There were several bad harvests. But the price for corn produced by the cottager was low. Big farmers could afford to save their own corn until prices went up.<sup>2</sup>

Countrymen were forced to poach when conditions were hard; but poaching had become difficult and dangerous. Land-owners put man-traps in the woods, and poaching could be punished by death or transportation.

Convicts due for transportation were taken first to the terrible 'hulks'. These were old ships kept near the mouths of rivers before being broken for waste. They were damp and full of rats. The convicts were kept below decks 'in irons'—that is, they were tied to heavy iron balls with chains. Many died, either in the hulks or on the long voyage to Australia.

The prisons were not much better. A Quaker reformer named

<sup>1</sup> Some areas, such as the mountainous Lake District in the north-west where Wordsworth lived, were of course not farming land. They remained open moor-land or heath.

<sup>2</sup> The radical writer William Cobbett spoke for the poor farmer against the big land-owner. He was put into prison. Later he was forced to find safety in America.



Elizabeth Fry tried to relieve suffering in Newgate. Convicts were still hanged in public, with a great crowd watching.

Labourers who had been in prison could never again find work on the land, except as a sort of slave. There was not enough work even for innocent people. Many turned to crime as a trade, as a means of living.

Crime increased in a frightening manner. In the cities it was a result of overcrowding. A million people lived in London. Over 100,000 lived each in Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds.

More factories had been needed to supply things for the French war. The speed of the industrial revolution had increased. The towns were too small now for all the people in them. Planning was bad. Local government was helpless and hopeless.

As the factories multiplied, people suffered increasingly in and around them. The town councils could not control the effects of the industrial revolution. They failed to provide houses, failed to supply fresh water and failed to remove waste. There was no public money for these things.

Most aldermen thought it foolish to obtain money by taxing the manufacturers. The poor must suffer. The employers built for themselves tall houses in the London manner, with high bedroom windows and curved 'bow' windows for the living-rooms below. The poor workers meanwhile lived in boxes—the back-to-back rows of terraced cottages—in the worst areas of the town.

Many families lived in single rooms, or were packed in damp cellars below ground. Rubbish, solid and liquid, was thrown into the front street. Only main streets were 'macadamed'—that is, given a hard, smooth surface. The rest were dirt.

Although most main streets were lit at night, with gas lamps placed at street corners, the side streets were seldom lit. It was easy in the dark to fall over heaps of rubbish, or slip into pools of waste.

The towns were the homes of fevers such as typhoid and cholera. People died also from tuberculosis and diphtheria, and thousands were marked by smallpox.

All these things attracted a lot of attention. But the prime minister, Lord Liverpool, and his government did nothing about them. They were more concerned with the safety of the country. The radicals were growing in strength.<sup>1</sup> The Luddite riots continued. Workers

<sup>1</sup> The poet Shelley wrote poems calling to the people to revolt against the government.



in many towns inarched with flags calling for 'bread, or blood'.

The crowds were on the streets in London, too. Somebody threw a stone or shot a gun at the prince regent's royal coach. (Nobody knew which, but the glass was broken.) At huge meetings the radicals called for the reform of Parliament. They said that all people should have the right to vote.

Four years after the battle of Waterloo, a large crowd gathered in St Peter's Fields, Manchester. The meeting was intended to be peaceful, but the local magistrates were afraid. They sent in the militia, who rode their horses into the crowd. Eleven people were killed, and 400 were badly hurt.

People referred bitterly to this mistake as the battle of 'Peterloo'. The government had not been faced by an army in Manchester, like Wellington at Waterloo. It had attacked an unarmed crowd.

The radicals wanted complete reform—social, political and economic. The gentlemen who led society were not consciously cruel. Their fault was that they did not care. The government was not consciously wicked. Its fault was in accepting the situation without thinking how to change it. The gentry of England—the squires, the bankers and the merchants—all believed injustice and religion. Many of them sympathized, but they honestly believed that the poor must suffer.

The radicals said that the Tories and Whigs were as bad as each other. Both of these two parties made a great show of attacking each other in Parliament, but both believed basically that only people with property should have the right to vote. The radicals said that this was wrong. People not property, they said, should be represented in Parliament. And people should be allowed to vote according to their beliefs, not according to the wishes of their masters and manor lords.

The Tory party was the party of land-owners and the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> The Whigs were the 'new rich', the merchants and the manufacturers. At elections, votes were bought and sold. Voters were bribed or made stupid with drink. But it did not really matter, because all votes were for the governing class.

They, the governing class, held all the top positions in the civil service, the army and navy, the church and the law, and in business and industry.

<sup>1</sup> It accepted a 'natural' arrangement of society. Keats's poem 'Endymion' was much criticized in Tory papers. Even 30 years later a hymn stated the position as 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate ...'.



Through these last two they controlled the economy. But ordinary people were living through some of the worst economic troubles in English history.

Thus the radicals demanded immediate political and economic reforms.

### *The moral reform*

But the radicals got few of the reforms they wanted. Instead they got moral reform. Good behaviour became the aim of a polite society.

The movement towards moral reform had existed since the days of Wesley. It had affected people's ideas about many things. For example, it made it possible for Wilberforce to succeed in his struggle against the slave trade.

Now Wilberforce led the moral reform movement in other directions. He wanted rich people (who ought to know better) to stop gambling, to stop having mistresses, and to stop drinking too much wine. He wanted them, as Christians, to observe Sundays properly as days for worship. He wanted them to think of their duties besides their pleasures. And, above all, he wanted all people to move closer to religion.

Many people agreed with him. Some felt that all the troubles of the French war and afterwards were God's punishments for the wickedness of the past. Now they wanted peace and comfort. A lot of them turned to the Anglican church.

But the church itself was not pure. Many parsons neglected their duties. Some made big profits from farming and managed to live like lords. Others said that their parishes were dull, and moved away to the city. There they enjoyed themselves while still taking their tithes. Out of 10,000 parsons in England, 4,000 were usually absent from their villages.

The reformers strongly opposed this avoidance of duty. They wanted the church to play a larger part in village life, particularly on Sundays. Like the Methodists, they demanded that amusements and entertainments be outlawed on that day.

Some of the reformers were ladies called 'blue-stockings'. That was the name which had been given, 50 years earlier, to clubs attended by people wanting to dress differently, with blue stockings on their legs. Blue-stockings ladies wanted to be different from ordinary women. They wanted to share a knowledge of the world equally with men. They



wanted to be 'emancipated'—that is, free from the limits set by society on female behaviour.

The blue-stockings ladies demanded that everyone should live morally; and they spread their message across their tea-tables, in women's clubs and at church meetings. They were attempting to reform society from above. At the same time, the Methodists were reforming it from below.

The Methodist message to the working class was: 'In this life you are made to suffer. Accept your sufferings without complaint. Think only of the after-life, and prepare for that.' It was a message which had done much to prevent working-class revolution. The nonconformist churches generally were against violence of any kind. Instead they preached self-help and self-reform.

Thus the reforming movement affected a great part of society. Religion especially became a serious matter. The Methodist churches were always full. Now the Anglican churches began to fill too. Ladies put on their best hats or bonnets and, at 11 o'clock every Sunday morning, they led their families to church.<sup>1</sup>

Thus also, religion was practised at various levels in society. Upper-class Anglicans practised it to set an example to the 'lower orders', as the other classes were called. The middle class practised it when it became the correct and proper thing to do. Religion became a duty, like house-keeping and the need to persuade children to wash behind their ears.

Children are a problem in any strict society, especially in a morally strict one. In England at that time, the best children did not go to school in their early years because at school they might be wrongly influenced. Instead the upper-class mothers employed a 'governess', or private teacher. Governesses were sometimes ladies from good families, but nearly always they were unmarried and often they were poor.<sup>2</sup> Their moral standards were high. They lived with the families for whom they worked, governing the children along the path to good behaviour.

'Behaviour' became the key to the moral life. For many people, *what* was done seemed less important than *how* it was done. A person must be seen doing good, because he (or she) must set a good example to the

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Heber, of the church in India, wrote some of the hymns which they sang.

<sup>2</sup> The three Bronte sisters—Charlotte, Emily and Anne—became governesses for a short time, but they were not happy with the work.



neighbours. That was the message which went out over the teacups; and that was the message which Englishmen and Englishwomen carried later to their colonies overseas. It earned for them the description 'hypocrites', or 'humbugs'.

We shall see more of the effects of moral reform later.<sup>1</sup> They were very wide. Among the gentry, quarrels were now settled in the law courts. That is, the practice of duelling—one of the last outward signs of chivalry and honour—almost disappeared. The dandy also was fading away. Colour began to go out of men's and women's clothes. Spoken language became purer—that is, less full of rude and violent words.

Even entertainment became moral, fit to 'improve' the audience. The drama almost died.<sup>2</sup> Only some splendid acting, performed in front of expensive scenery, kept the theatres alive. People went to see the fine actor Edmund Kean rather than the plays in which he acted. Most plays had a happy, moral ending. Even Shakespeare was re-written to suit 'pure' minds.<sup>3</sup>

The reformers hoped for a new, serious society in which there would be no place for the wickedness of the old. But one of the wickedest persons from the old society was still very much alive. His royal court continued to set bad moral standards, which shocked them all.

This was 'Prinny'—the fat, pleasure-loving prince regent. And 'Prinny' was now to have the throne at last, as George IV.

### *The reign of George IV*

George, who became king after the death of his 82-year-old father, was not wicked in the sense that he was hard or evil. He was too weak for that. Nevertheless, he was wicked in the moral sense.

He hated his queen, Caroline of Brunswick; but he had good reasons for hating her. She was loud-mouthed, bad-tempered, and had dirty habits. There was a daughter, the princess Charlotte, but she died at the age of 21.

<sup>1</sup> Readers can see some of them in the novels of 'George Eliot'—a woman—who was born at that time. An older writer, Thomas Love Peacock, never reformed. He laughed at the new ways of behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> Few plays written at that time are read today. Most of them were 'melodramas' which (like the early romantic novels) were full of heroes and villains. They contained plenty of excitement, but not much sense.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Bowdler re-wrote Shakespeare, using tame words such as 'person' for 'body', and 'Heaven' for 'God'.



When George became king, Caroline was living abroad. He was trying to divorce her. George was 58, but he still had mistresses.

Caroline became determined to claim her rights as queen. She decided to return to England and attend the coronation. The Whigs supported her, and one of them, Lord Brougham, was her chief adviser.

The queen was popular. The king and his Tory government were unpopular. Only a few weeks earlier, a group of desperate men had met in Cato Street in the west of London to plan the murder of Lord Liverpool and other ministers. The plotters had been discovered and arrested. After a public trial, 5 of them had been executed in front of a sympathetic crowd.

The 'Cato Street Conspiracy', as it was called, left Londoners in a fever of excitement. Many shared the view that the government must go. At a time when people were without work and starving, it was preparing a splendid and costly coronation for a useless king.

Now Queen Caroline appeared on the scene, ready to make profit from the situation. She was a fat old woman of 50, and she arrived in the streets of London wearing a low-cut dress and leather boots. The crowds cheered. They stopped her carriage, took off the horses, and pulled it themselves past the king's window at Carlton House.

The divorce case was judged by the House of Lords. The queen was on trial. Lord Brougham defended her. All her life since marriage was reviewed.

For 3 months, while the trial continued, George IV hid himself in his castle at Windsor. Public disgust with him increased, until Lord Liverpool decided that the trial must be stopped. Londoners rejoiced for the queen with fireworks and bonfires for days afterwards.

But the queen was not allowed by the government to attend the coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey. She was driven away from a side door. And two weeks later she died.

Few people cared for the king after that. He was lucky not to lose his throne. People stopped caring for ceremonies too; and George, who had always enjoyed them, seemed like a person from the past.

There were other, more important things for forward-looking people to think about. In industry, steam-engines increasingly drove machines in mines and factories. Now an engineer named George Stephenson put steam-engines on wheels. The first passenger railway began. Stephenson's railway engine, 'The Rocket', was admired by thousands of people.



Education, also, was spreading and developing. London University was started. Oxford and Cambridge opened their doors to boys of the middle classes. Schools did not yet teach science, but they taught history and geography besides religion, Latin and Greek.

One of the aims of education was to teach moral and gentlemanly behaviour. In Dr Thomas Arnold's school at Rugby, the boys in the sixth forms were made 'prefects'. Their job was to provide a good example to the younger boys. They were being prepared to lead society, as members of the new ruling class.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps 'governing' is a better word than 'ruling' for the top English social class. Even the king could no longer rule. He could only reign with the permission of the people. The government could make laws and rules only with the permission of Parliament. And even Parliament could not work without the people's support.

But 'the people' meant the new and still growing middle class. They did not like laws and rules, especially those which affected business. They thought that government is best when it is not seen. The less a government did, the better.

The French word for this is *laissez-faire*. Let things remain as they are, without disturbing them. Let the law of supply and demand operate freely, with both goods and labour. Let things find their own level. Then all will be well.

The Tories believed firmly in *laissez-faire*, and the Whigs generally agreed with them.

But situations change. People multiply, learn their lawful rights, want more, and shout for reform. Politicians grow bolder with demands.

Thus a radical M.P. pushed through Parliament a Bill for the workers. The resulting Act made it possible for workers to join together in trade unions. The unions could now bargain with employers for better working conditions, although it was still difficult for workers to strike, to stop work, without being arrested.

Thus also, the Whig leader Lord Brougham, whom the government regarded as a dangerous socialist, demanded reform in the common law. The delays and costs of getting a decision in the court of Chancery were terrible. Some cases dragged on for 20 years.

Even the government saw the necessity for some reforms. The

<sup>1</sup> Dr Arnold's son, Matthew Arnold, was at Rugby school. He became a civil servant, an inspector of schools. He was a writer in his spare time.



responsibility of the home secretary, Robert Peel, included the criminal law. Death was the punishment for 200 different crimes, including sheep-stealing and harming trees near the prime minister's house in Downing Street. Peel reduced these punishments and made the law easier for the judges to work.

There were changes too at the foreign office. Castlereagh killed himself when his brain became unbalanced by work and responsibility. The new foreign secretary, George Canning, was adventurous. He supported revolutions against colonialism in central and south America, Portugal and Greece.<sup>1</sup>

Canning used the navy to support freedom movements in those far-away places. People were glad to be reminded that Britain ruled the waves. Sending gun-boats to show Britain's power became increasingly popular later in the century.

Lord Liverpool became ill and resigned, and Canning was prime minister for a few months. Then Canning died; and shortly afterwards the Tories turned to the Duke of Wellington, the hero of Waterloo.

Many people thought that making the Iron Duke prime minister was like putting England under military rule. Wellington was a plain, straight soldier. He did not like politics, and he did not see the need for reforms. The followers of Canning refused to work under him. A few of them joined the Whigs.

At the Duke's right hand was Robert Peel, a politician of great honesty and skill. As home secretary Peel now organized the London police. He replaced the old 'Bow Street runners' with 1,000 new policemen dressed in tall hats and blue belted coats. They became known as 'bobbies', 'Bobby' being another form of Peel's first name, 'Robert'. While the provincial police remained responsible to local J.P.s, this new service was controlled by the home office at Whitehall.

It was Peel also who carried another reform through Parliament against strong opposition from his own party. This was the emancipation of Catholics, allowing them to hold, like Anglicans, positions in the government and civil service. Already nonconformists could occupy state offices and sit in Parliament. Now Catholics were emancipated also, for the first time in 150 years.

George IV was as much opposed to Catholic emancipation as his

<sup>1</sup> Byron's death among the Greeks had stirred English sympathy for their demands for independence from Turkey.



father had been. The House of Hanover was firmly Protestant. But George IV was weaker than George III, and at last he signed the necessary Bill.

George was worn out in mind and body. He had searched for popularity and failed to find it. Now after a reign of only 10 years, he met death without regret.

He was followed to the throne by a brother, William, Duke of Clarence.<sup>1</sup>

### *The reign of William IV*

In the year that William IV came to the throne, the cry for political reform became greater than ever before. There was violence across the country, particularly in the 'home' counties, the southern counties near London.

The new king was 65 years old. He had served in the navy in his early years, and he always remained interested in naval affairs. He was a simple man, easy and fun-loving, but he was not much interested in politics. Certainly he was not interested in reform.

The prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, was very much against reform. The Iron Duke was a Tory of the old sort. People respected him because of his military victories, but he was not popular.

Some of the younger Tories who had followed Canning were more than willing to accept reform; they were eager for it. Now they voted with the Whigs and defeated the old Tories in the House of Commons. Wellington resigned.

In the British two-party system of democracy there is always an official opposition to the government. It was now the king's duty to ask the leader of the opposition to form a government, and William IV did this. He sent for the Whig leader, Lord Grey, who was a firm reformer. In fact Grey had supported the idea of political reform for 40 years. Now the opportunity of effecting Whig policies came to this old man.

The election system certainly needed reform. In the counties, only men with 40 shillings annual income from their own land were qualified to vote; and only 1 man in every 10 of the population had that income. In the boroughs, the situation was different, with each borough having its own rules. The borough of Westminster had 17,000 electors, but in the rotten boroughs there were very few. The most famous rotten

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 313.



borough was 'Old Sarum' near Salisbury. It had been a Roman, then a Saxon, town. Now it was nothing more than a green hill, and yet it returned two members to Parliament. While rotten boroughs such as this had M.P.s, some of the new factory towns with thousands of citizens were not represented in the House of Commons at Westminster.

But the Whig reformers under Lord Grey did not intend to give the vote to everybody. They only wanted the support of the new middle class. The Bill which they introduced gave the vote only to men paying rates on their property. It was still property rather than people, they said, which should be represented in Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Even this modest Bill failed to pass the House of Commons on the first occasion. Soon, however, there was a general election. The Whigs were returned with a majority of 136. Lord Grey formed a popular government, the first purely Whig government for 50 years, and tried again.

This time the Bill passed in the Commons but failed in the House of Lords, where there were many more Tory peers than Whig peers.

As the second part of Parliament, this 'upper house' was a delaying room. Every Bill must be passed by both Commons and Lords, and then be signed by the king, before it became an Act. If the Lords refused a Bill—that is, if they 'threw it out'—then it must be referred back to the Commons. This gave everyone an opportunity to think again.

When the Tory majority in the Lords threw out the Reform Bill for a second time, Lord Grey asked the king to make some more Whig peers. The Tories were thus threatened. When the Bill came up again to the upper house, they did not vote against it.

The Reform Act took about 140 parliamentary seats away from the pocket and rotten boroughs and spread them more evenly through the population. It increased the number of voters from 435,000 to about 700,000. And in these two ways it spread power to the new middle class.

Lord Grey's government introduced other reforms also. It freed all slaves in the British empire, thus completing the work of William Wilberforce. It paid 20 million pounds to the West Indian planters and to the Boer farmers in South Africa as value for the freed slaves.

It passed a Poor Law Act to deal with the country's million paupers.

<sup>1</sup> The young Whig writer Thomas Babington Macaulay was an M.P. who spoke for the Bill. He told members, 'Reform, that you may preserve.'



The Act said that anyone unable to support himself must go into a work-house and be supported there by the local parish.

This was a tidy solution to a difficult problem, but poor people hated it. The parish work-houses were under the control of boards of guardians, whose officers were the parish beadle. The beades were often cruel, and conditions in the work-houses were often terrible. Work-houses were like prisons. They were kept as a threat to people who were able but unwilling to work.

After the Poor Law Act, the Whigs turned to local government reform. Old Grey retired, and his place was taken by Lord Melbourne, a likeable but rather lazy man.

Melbourne's government realized that few town councils were efficient. Council elections were a joke. The aldermen were chosen by the richest and most influential rate-payers, and then they did nothing except serve the interests of those who had chosen them. The system was medieval.

The result of Melbourne's Act was that, in each of about 180 towns, there was now a mayor elected by the council for a year. The councillors themselves were elected for 3 years, every rate-payer having a vote. Council officials, such as the town clerk and the treasurer, were appointed. The new councils had powers to make 'by-laws', or local rules. They were soon able also to control the provincial police, who made sure that the by-laws were obeyed.

Another Act of Melbourne's government provided a national record of births, deaths and marriages. This was kept at Somerset House in London. Local records were still kept in parish churches, in 'parish registers', but now anyone could get from the state a paper proving his family history.

Radicals complained that there was little in these reforms to help the working class. But Lord Melbourne, like the Tories, believed in *laissez-faire* and in obtaining middle-class support.

In 20 years the wealth of many people had doubled. The gap between the middle and working classes had opened wide. Skilled workmen and clerks were 'middle class'. They were willing to support the government against the labourers. So, after the Reform Act, the Whig government saw no need to go further.

But a government which starts reform always faces trouble when it stops.



The trouble for the whig government came from trade unionism. When the unions made demands for higher wages, they usually failed because they were weak. Little groups of workers tried to become stronger by asking other workers for promises to support them.

In the village of Tolpuddle in Dorsetshire, 6 labourers tried to obtain such promises from other farm workers. They were arrested, and sent as convicts to Australia. This caused trouble in other places. Workers joined together in sympathy with the 'Tolpuddle martyrs', as the 6 men were called. About 250,000 signed a letter asking the government to free them. Lord Melbourne refused.

The Tolpuddle martyrs became the heroes of the working class. The government was weak and divided. It gave the workers a few things with its left hand but kept away many more with its right. People could not see what its policies really were.

The Tories were different. Their policies were clear. Their leader, Sir Robert Peel, re-named the party 'Conservative'. He said it would 'conserve', keep from change, the position which the radicals wanted to change.

So, while the Whigs were partly liberal with their policies, the Conservatives were not. Curiously, however, while the Whigs were led from the House of Lords, the Conservatives were led from the House of Commons. Melbourne, the son of a lord, had graceful, easy manners. Peel, who was the son of a cotton manufacturer, was a stronger and more determined man.

### *The workshop of the world*

William IV died without leaving children. His niece, Victoria, was recognized as heir to the throne.<sup>1</sup>

The 18-year-old-girl was told of her uncle's death early one morning, while she was still in bed. That same day she held a privy council, and Melbourne as prime minister became her chief adviser. He helped her with her duties and acted as a kind of private secretary, guiding her first steps as queen.

Her position was weak. After George and William, many people regarded royal persons with scorn. But Victoria was a young woman with a strong sense of public duty. Within 4 months she was opening her first parliament, reading the official speech herself.

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 313.



Although she had no power to rule, the queen expected information from her ministers, and had power to urge and warn. She had other powers, too. She could make men knights and nobles. She could appoint bishops in the Anglican church. She could reward people with 'honours', official marks of their value in society. These things were important in class-conscious England.

The crown had existed for a longer period than parliamentary democracy. It was above politics. It gave strength to the whole constitution because people were loyal to it. While the queen remained head of the state, nobody else could rise and control the state.

The queen was advised by her prime minister and her privy council. All members of the privy council were given the title 'right honourable'. Among them were cabinet ministers, members of past cabinets, the leader of the opposition, and famous soldiers, churchmen and civil servants. On the advice of the privy council, Queen Victoria could accept the resignation of ministries and proposals for new ones.

Nevertheless, a queen is a lonely person. Two years after her coronation, Victoria offered marriage to a German prince, Albert of Saxe-Coburg.

Prince Albert was given first place at court after the queen herself. He was a serious young man, who quickly learned the English system of politics. He was eager to protect his wife's queenly powers, and anxious that she should be respected not only at court but by all the British people.

When the Whigs were defeated in an election, and Melbourne went, Prince Albert became Victoria's chief adviser. He performed many public duties, and the British quickly learned to respect him. Together, as they grew older, Victoria and Albert with their children became a model for other families. With the coming of photography, their pictures were kept on the walls of many middle-class homes.

The new prime minister was the Conservative Sir Robert Peel. His interests were economic rather than political. Reform had gone far enough. Now was the time to make the country economically strong. Peel believed that this could be done through free trade.

Free trade meant the reduction of taxes on imports and exports. A free flow of goods into the country would mean, Peel thought, cheaper food. It would help Britain's exports too, because other countries would follow the example and reduce taxes on their imports of British goods.



Peel also wanted British money to be the most valuable in the world. The Bank of England must keep gold to the value of the notes which it printed. A bank-note was a promise to pay. Peel said that the Bank should always be able to keep that promise. The saying 'as safe as the Bank of England' became the mark of Britain's wealth.

The island was developing into a great industrial ant-heap, with everybody busy and the factories producing more goods than the islanders needed for themselves.

Everything was moving faster and faster in this workshop of the world. A civil servant named Rowland Hill invented a system of penny stamps for letters. Now the postal services developed, with the railways carrying mail more quickly and cheaply than ever before. More lines were laid, joining towns and cities. London's huge stations—Paddington, Euston, King's Cross, Waterloo, Victoria—were being built.

Other public buildings also rose up, many of them higher than buildings had ever been before. There were town halls, council offices, public libraries, public baths, police stations, shops and hotels, and hundreds of new factories and store-houses. Many were built in an ornamental manner,<sup>1</sup> with red, brown and yellow brick. Many were ugly, but all were solid and strongly made. They were built to last.

In the new middle-class suburbs, too, the houses were heavy and solid. Some were 'terraced', joined together in rows. They were tall and narrow, each with 3 or 4 floors and a cellar or basement below ground. Many had iron fences at the front, surrounding a small sunken yard called an 'area'. One lot of steps went up to the front door of each house in the terrace, while another lot went down into the 'area'. The front door of the basement was in the 'area', leading to an underground kitchen or wash-room or servants' room. A 'semi-basement' was below street level like a basement, but it had another door which opened on to a narrow strip of garden at the back of the house.

A family in a terraced house lived usually on the first floor up, with its bedrooms on the floors above that.

Houses which stood alone were called 'detached'. They were separate from (and were often built to look different from) each other. A suburban detached house usually had only one floor upstairs, with three or four

<sup>1</sup> Builders besides artists and writers still looked back sometimes to earlier centuries. They wanted something that looked different from the common things produced in the factory by machine.



bedrooms. In some suburbs there was enough space for each house to have a large garden.

Some houses were rented, while others were owned. All householders paid rates to the local council.

The main London suburbs were Rotherhithe, Bermondsey, Walworth and Battersea in the south; Fulham, Hammersmith and Paddington in the west; Camden Town and Islington in the north; and Hackney and Stepney in the east. All these places were about 5 miles from either the City or the West End.

Every morning the front doors opened and the office workers came out in their best dark clothes and chimney-like 'top' hats. There were businessmen, lawyers, civil servants, managers, shop assistants and clerks, all going to their places of work. Most of them walked, although from some suburbs there were horse-drawn buses and from others there were suburban trains.

And every evening, at a fixed time, they all went home again—back to their coal-fired sitting-rooms and their waiting wives.

There is an old saying, 'an Englishman's home is his castle'. These middle-class Englishmen certainly wanted to be private. They surrounded their homes with high hedges, made of the bushes called laurel and privet, while their wives hung heavy curtains at the windows. Friends and neighbours entered the home only as guests, following an invitation.

Entertainment was usually in the form of an 'at home'. An 'at home' party was polite rather than freely enjoyable. The guests sat stiffly round on chairs while the lady of the house played to them on the piano or the eldest daughter sang a religious song. The furniture was dark and heavy. The carpets and the wall-paper were dark and dull.

The rooms of most of these suburban houses were stuffed with ornaments, made in Manchester or Derby, and with pictures which were copies of famous originals. Fashions and manners move downwards in society. The middle-class home was a smaller and poorer copy of the great mansion. The habits and ways of speech of middle-class families were as close to those of the gentry as they could make them.

Thus, for example, the habit of bathing in hot water spread steadily. For the first time since the Romans, 15 centuries earlier, some houses were now provided with boilers to make hot water for taps and baths. While most people still rubbed themselves with cold water once a week, better-class families kept themselves clean with comfort.



The word in England for a person who wants to appear better than his neighbours is a 'snob'. A snob chooses his house and his friends carefully. Thus, Victorian ladies who lived in the good-class London district of Kensington refused to go north of 'the Park'—that is, Hyde Park—where the houses are poorer. They might 'lose class' if they were seen even visiting a poorer district.

Many Victorians of the new middle class were snobs. They pretended to be better educated, of better class, and richer, than they really were. Even those who were not snobs tried to appear 'respectable'. That is, they were moral, honest, earnest, strict, and generally dull.

The Reform Act had given them the vote. Now they were against all things radical, because radicalism meant competition from the working class.

### *The limits of reform*

Peel's Conservatives, like the Whigs, aimed to please the middle-class electors. But a young Conservative M.P., a Jew named Benjamin Disraeli, thought differently. He joined a group of politicians called 'the Young Englanders'.

The idea of 'Young England' was a romantic one. It was that the gentry should lead the working class in a common struggle against the middle-class mass of Whig supporters.<sup>1</sup> But the idea was also an unreal one. It failed to understand that the mass of workers hated the gentry<sup>2</sup> almost as much as they hated the merchants and the clerks.

The young Disraeli was a political adventurer. He was busy climbing the Conservative party tree. The real ideas for liberal reform came from the working class itself.

In the factory towns a movement developed which today we should call socialism.<sup>3</sup> It was started among men who worked machines for

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli wrote several novels about the condition of England at that time. In *Coningsby* he introduced the idea of 'Young England'. The new Conservatives were, he said, the 'few' who would help the 'many'. In *Sybil* he described 'two nations' in England, the rich and the poor. Young gentlemen should help the poor against the rich, he said.

<sup>2</sup> The melodramas of that time often included a central character who was a bold bad baron. He was the villain, whose evil deeds were the basis of the story.

<sup>3</sup> The writer John Stuart Mill spoke for it when he said that 'the rule that they who do not work shall not eat', should be applied 'not to paupers only' but equally to all.



long hours every day, men whose fathers had been countrymen, as free as the open air. These poor men were not free. They were controlled by beadles, bailiffs, clerks, managers and employers (who were supported by the government), all the days of their lives.

There was a 'people's charter', which demanded 6 things: elections for a new parliament every year, votes for all men, secret voting, working-class M.P.s, payment of M.P.s, and equal electoral districts.

Parliament at that time was elected for seven years.<sup>1</sup> During its life it could pass any law without regard to the people's wishes. Equally, it could refuse to pass any law.

The Chartists—the people who supported the charter—saw no hope for the workers without the reform of Parliament. They made their demands at huge meetings. They marched through the cities. They collected a million signatures to papers stating their demands, which Whig and Conservative governments both refused to accept. First Melbourne, then Peel, refused the charter.

The Chartists became famous, nevertheless. They caused riots, organized stoppages of work, and spread socialist ideas from town to town. There was the threat of violence wherever Chartists gathered. People feared them, until the movement grew weaker because it lacked leaders. Then they laughed at them. Only a few sympathized.<sup>2</sup>

The workers wanted social justice first. Secondly they wanted more and cheaper food.

A series of bad harvests had pushed up the price of bread. Many poor people suffered. The years 1840–5 are known in English history as the 'hungry forties'.

Part of the trouble was due to the Corn Laws, which controlled the import of corn from abroad. The Corn Laws existed to protect the British farmer against competition from cheap foreign corn. They were useful, particularly, to the land-owning squires.

But the Corn Laws made bread expensive, and they were a bar in the way to free trade. A group of reformers, in a movement known as the Manchester School, was demanding complete free trade. These re-

<sup>1</sup> Now it is elected for five. All the other demands made by the charter have since been met.

<sup>2</sup> The poets T. L. Beddoes and Thomas Hood, for example. Thomas Carlyle took the opposite view. He believed that the condition of the masses would be improved not by political means but by honest service to their 'natural' leaders, the gentry.



formers were led in Manchester by two radical politicians named Richard Cobden and John Bright.

Cobden and Bright demanded that the Corn Laws be 'repealed'—that is, ended. They organized mass meetings, sent out letters and papers, and tried to persuade M.P.s of both parties.

The prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, sympathized with their demand. But there were many land-owning squires in the Conservative party. Some were 'back-benchers', sitting behind the government benches, or seats, in the House of Commons. Generally they supported Peel in everything, but repeal of the Corn Laws would lose them much wealth and gain them nothing.

These back-benchers were led by Benjamin Disraeli. He did not really care whether the Corn Laws were repealed or not, but he was a first-rate politician and he wanted power. Again and again he rose up on his feet, opposing his leader Peel, attacking the idea of free trade, and demanding that the Corn Laws be kept.

Nevertheless, Peel was determined to push the repeal through Parliament. He was supported by many in his party, and he also had support from the Whigs. The Corn Laws were repealed; but Peel split his party. The next general election was fought by the 'Peelites', Disraeli's 'true' Conservatives, and the Whigs.

The Whigs won.

The new prime minister was Lord John Russell, who was an old-fashioned kind of Whig reformer.

Russell's foreign secretary was Lord Palmerston, a minister who had gained great popularity in Lord Melbourne's government, 5 years earlier. Palmerston was a 'strong' man, stronger than his leader, and he was the star of English politics for the next 20 years of Queen Victoria's reign.

### *The Victorians*

At the centre of the West End district of London known as St James's, there is a royal palace called St James's Palace. Victoria as queen preferred to use Buckingham Palace, which is a short distance away, but St James's remained important nevertheless. It was still used for official purposes, including foreign affairs. Foreign diplomats were received by the queen as 'ambassadors to the Court of St James'.

St James's was also important as the area which included the street



named Pall Mall with its fine London clubs. Palmerston was popular there. He was the Victorian gentlemen's idea of the ideal foreign minister. He showed the British flag to the world in the same way that Canning had done—with gun-boats. People thought of Palmerston as the 'bull-dog' kind of Englishman, with a sword in one hand and the red, white and blue flag, the 'Union Jack', in the other.

Great people belonged to the London clubs.<sup>1</sup> They sat in deep leather chairs, talking quietly or reading copies of the London *Times*.<sup>2</sup> They met there to exchange news and views, while enjoying good food and drink and the use of the club's fine library.

So the St James's clubs were the homes of serious but unofficial discussion on all the political problems of those years. Arguments at a lower level happened at working-men's clubs, in pubs and ale-houses, and at open-air meetings—particularly in Hyde Park. There, at Speakers' Corner, men with opinions of all sorts were free to state them to anybody willing to stand and listen. The speakers stood on large wooden soap-boxes, arguing with the crowds around. Anybody in the crowd could argue back or move to hear someone on a different soap-box. Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park was a kind of open-air parliament for the common man.

The beliefs of most Victorians were basically simple. They were concerned with the rights of man, the glory of the Christian God, and the truth of the Bible. Many people still believed it true that the world was made in six days, that God rested on the seventh, and that the first people were Adam and Eve.

Christian men and women thought that it was their duty to persuade other people of the value of religion and the truth of all the beliefs of the Christian church. One group within the Anglican church, called 'the Oxford Movement', did much to spread its own ideas.<sup>3</sup> It sent out tracts and persuaded more Anglican priests to work in the poor areas of big cities.

Most Victorians, particularly of the middle class, also thought that there was no other country as good as England, and no other city as fine

<sup>1</sup> They included writers. Dickens and Thackeray quarrelled in the Garrick club and ended their quarrel years later in another, the Athenaeum.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* was, and still is, England's most important newspaper.

<sup>3</sup> Which were close to Catholicism. John Henry Newman, who was one of the leaders of the 'Tractarians', as the group was sometimes called, became a Roman Catholic.



as London. Looking south across Hyde Park, visitors to London saw the splendid houses of rich and famous Englishmen. In front of these houses, along Rotten Row, fine gentlemen rode horses for sport or took their wives along in carriages to enjoy the summer air. Every piece of paint, every leather strap, every boot and button was clean and shining.

It was a man's world. The ladies were pretty in their bonnets and 'crinoline' skirts—which were wide and padded and made of silk or satin—but they depended on their husbands to buy these things. They carried sun-shades called 'parasols' to protect their white skins from the summer sun. They wore little white gloves to protect their hands. But their greatest protection was marriage, and the safety of their solid homes.

Girls were married as soon as possible, sometimes as young as 17, because unmarried women were often laughed at or pitied by society. They were called 'old maids'. The only proper joy for a good woman, people thought, was the joy of marriage and of having many children. The only real pleasure for her was to care for her husband and her home.

The husband cared for his wife as though she were a child. She was not allowed to keep property of her own; all of it came to him at marriage. He gave her 'house-keeping money', with which she must buy food for the family. Although a weak husband sometimes allowed his wife to say how the family income should be spent, and although a strong wife sometimes ruled the house, neither of these things was usual. In most homes, the husband was the master.

The father ruled the family. He chose friends for his wife, husbands for his daughters,<sup>1</sup> and employment for his sons. His word was law.

The ideas of these solid, middle-class men were rooted in the English past. They valued the society in which they lived and suspected most ideas for change as unnecessary, damaging, or even evil. They were particularly suspicious of foreign influences from the other side of the English Channel. They did not like foreigners or trust them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some girls (especially eldest daughters, like the poetess Elizabeth Barrett) were too useful in the house for marriage, and were allowed to grow into old maids.

<sup>2</sup> The poet Robert Browning, who married Elizabeth Barrett, was different. He lived for many years in Italy. Lord Tennyson, on the other hand, seldom went abroad.



Victorians were interested in learning more about their own country. They enjoyed exploring it. The railways cutting through the countryside meant travel for many who had never travelled before. People from villages saw other villages, different from their own. People from cities and suburbs escaped on holiday to the northern hills and moors, to the soft fields and hedges of the south, and to sandy beaches by the sea. Bradshaw's railway time-table was printed, and soon became the key to adventure.

Towns-people admired the English countryside and envied the country people, who seemed free from worry and care. Increasingly the middle classes used the countryside for entertainment and sport.<sup>1</sup> Some fished in its rivers and shot birds in its marshes and on its moors. Others searched for peace in its fields and hills.

But while Victorians valued both their past history and their natural surroundings, they also approved of progress. Prince Albert gave them the idea of a Great Exhibition, a show-place in a great building made of glass and iron, which they called the Crystal Palace. The Exhibition included show-pieces of industrial progress from many nations; but chief among them were things made in Britain—the workshop of the world.

Six million people visited the Great Exhibition. They saw huge machines made of iron. They saw a railway engine, a model bridge, a musical organ, a model of Liverpool port, coal-mining lamps, and heavy guns. They also saw brass ornaments from India, a fire-engine from Canada, cotton-goods from Egypt, and pots made in West Africa. The Crystal Palace was full of new, strange and exciting things.

Many people were curious about other parts of the world. A businessman named Thomas Cook offered holiday trips across the Channel to the French coast. Soon he was advertising tours of Europe lasting several weeks. Most holiday-makers did not like the European food, which was too full of oil, but they went nevertheless. Holidays with 'Cook's Tours', to strange countries, became increasingly popular.

In those years too, thousands more Britishers went overseas in search of wealth and adventure. There was gold in America and Australia. Many went there, while others journeyed to Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

<sup>1</sup> Many enjoyed reading about 'Mr Jorrocks', the character in a series of novels by R. S. Surtees about fox-hunting.



England seemed to be the centre of the world at that time. Certainly Palmerston's foreign policy was concerned with many distant countries, from South America to the Middle East and to China.

Indeed that busy minister was so active that he annoyed the queen, her husband Prince Albert, and the prime minister Lord John Russell. In the same year as the Great Exhibition they obtained his dismissal. Palmerston as foreign secretary had become, in the words of an old English saying, 'too big for his boots'.

Lord John Russell as prime minister did not last much longer. His Whig ministry could not manage without Palmerston. Within a few months the Conservatives were in again, this time under Lord Derby, another peer of the old sort. Disraeli was Derby's chancellor of the exchequer.

But this Conservative ministry held power for only a few months. Although Peel was dead, his followers, the 'Peelites', were against a regular Conservative government. They joined with the Whigs and pushed it out. Then they agreed to govern with the Whigs under a new Peelite leader, Lord Aberdeen. This was a 'coalition' government, a mixture of parties. It even contained one radical.

Palmerston was home secretary.

### *The Crimean War*

Although Palmerston's official responsibility as home secretary was for affairs inside Britain, he was still in the cabinet and continued to influence foreign affairs. The great question now was whether to help the Turks in their war against the Russians. The prime minister, Lord Aberdeen, hesitated. He was a peaceable man, with no wish to drag Britain into a war.

But the British people, persuaded by Palmerston, wanted to show their strength. They were tired of peace. They had not fought a big war for nearly 40 years; but they remembered the glory of Waterloo. Sons of men who had been in that battle were eager for Britain to fight again.

An allied fleet, British and French, sailed into the Black Sea and attacked the Russian naval base at Sebastopol on the Crimea. The British army which stepped on to Russian soil there was commanded by Lord Raglan, a 66-year-old general who had lost an arm at Waterloo.

This army was without experience and it was badly organized and



supplied. Many of its officers had no faith in it. Others were without faith in the war. Turkey was 'the sick man of Europe' threatened by 'the Russian bear'. Why should they be fighting with the French, who had been their enemies before, against the Russians, who had been their friends? Few British soldiers felt much sympathy for the Turks.

The army was not a large one. It had fewer than 30,000 men. Britain already had armies in India, Africa and other parts of the empire; and a larger one could not be spared.

It contained 12 brigades, of which 2 were cavalry and 10 infantry. The 2 cavalry brigades were called the Heavy and the Light brigades. Their duty was to support infantry in open countryside. On flat ground a brigade of charging horsemen could break a much larger group of enemy infantry. In the cavalry there were 'dragoons' and 'lancers', who carried long spears called lances. There were also 'hussars' carrying long curved swords, called sabres, with which they struck down from their horses at the enemy.

The cavalry in Lord Raglan's army was commanded by Lord Lucan, and under him there was Lord Cardigan who had command of the Light Brigade. Raglan was old and tired, Lucan was proud and stupid, and Cardigan had a terrible temper. Cardigan hated Lucan, and Lucan hated him. They were always quarrelling.

Two months after the army had landed in the Crimea, Raglan's base was at Balaklava, a fishing village 7 miles south of Sebastopol.

Between Balaklava and Sebastopol are two valleys divided by an area of high ground, on which the Turks—Britain's allies—had put some British heavy guns. But early one morning the Russians made a surprise attack, reached the high ground and captured the cannons.

The Heavy Brigade, charging out of the south valley, drove the Russians from the nearer hills. Lord Cardigan with the Light Brigade was a mile away, where the two valleys joined. He saw that glorious charge, and felt angry and jealous. He blamed Lord Lucan for not letting the Light Brigade attack, too.

The Russians were still moving captured British guns from the far end of the high ground. Lord Raglan now sent an order to the Light Brigade. He wanted it to advance up the *south* valley, attack the hills and stop the Russians moving the rest of the guns. Already they had put several rows of them at their end of the *north* valley.

Raglan gave this message to one of his officers, Captain Nolan. He



told him to take it to Lord Lucan, who was with Cardigan and the Light Brigade at the joining of the two valleys.

Lucan could not see the Russians on the hills. He could see only the rows of guns, with the Russians behind them, at the far end of the north valley. He could not believe that Raglan meant 670 horsemen to attack such a strong position from the front. But Nolan shouted, 'There, sir! There is your enemy!' He was excited, and waved his arm towards the wrong valley.

So Lucan passed the order to Cardigan, who calmly led the Light Brigade forward up the north valley towards the lines of guns. Nolan soon saw that a mistake had been made, but the Russians began firing before he could warn Cardigan. Nolan was shot from his horse and fell dead to the ground.

Thus the 670 men of the Light Brigade rode towards their death. Only Cardigan and 200 others came back down the valley. Raglan blamed Lucan, but many people blamed Raglan himself.

The battle of Balaklava was followed ten days later by the battle of Inkerman. This was an even more bloody affair, with 3,400 British and French killed and wounded.

Then winter came. Thousands of British soldiers died from cold, hunger and fever. The army's supplies were managed badly. The soldiers lacked tents, warm clothes, food and medicine.

Sebastopol remained in Russian hands, while the condition of Raglan's army became worse and worse. At the base hospital at Scutari, near Constantinople, conditions were terrible. The sick and wounded died like flies in the cold. A brave nurse named Florence Nightingale went to help. She took other nurses with her from England, and together they organized the hospital, working month after month, both day and night. At night-time Florence Nightingale went round the beds, treating and comforting men who could not sleep. They called her 'the lady with the lamp'.

The confusion and the misery in the Crimea was reported to the British public by the *London Times*. When people read the articles and saw the photographs, they were shocked. There was a demand for a committee of inquiry into the management of the war.

Lord Aberdeen's government resigned. Palmerston became prime minister. The country needed a war leader; but soon afterwards the Russians agreed to a peace and the war came to an end.



Palmerston's government decided to reward those men who had fought most bravely in the war. They offered the Victoria Cross, a medal with a ribbon fixed to it. The medal was made from metal cut from captured Russian guns.

The Victoria Cross is still given in modern times, but only for the acts of greatest courage in war. It is now the most valued military medal in Britain. The names of men (both living and dead) to whom it is given, are followed by the proud letters, V.C.

### *The empire-builders*

The years after the mid-century were wonderful years for a great many Englishmen. Money from the colonies was pouring into the country. The middle class was wealthier than at any time before. Nearly 2 million families lived in good houses, and few of them worried about how the other 6 million lived. Most middle-class families kept at least one servant, ate huge meals, and dressed in thick warm clothes. Rich middle-class women hung jewels round their necks and were not ashamed.

Such families had plenty of spare time for pleasure and special interests: for example, music. Many people learned to play the piano or the violin.

Victorians enjoyed pictures, too—preferably life-like pictures which told a simple story. But few approved of 'modern' painters such as the pre-Raphaelites,<sup>1</sup> who imitated the old Italian painters before Raphael. The pre-Raphaelites used colours which were too bright, and produced paintings which were difficult to understand. Many of them showed medieval scenes.<sup>2</sup>

The Victorians also enjoyed poetry and novels, both of which they read aloud to their friends and families.<sup>3</sup> Many novels were so long that they appeared in three volumes. Others were written in parts, in papers called magazines, which appeared every month.<sup>4</sup> Some novels did more than tell stories. They were written to bring attention to social problems

<sup>1</sup> A group led by the poet D. G. Rossetti.

<sup>2</sup> Pre-Raphaelite attempts to escape from the ugly industrial world were supported by the writer John Ruskin.

<sup>3</sup> The novelist Wilkie Collins had the idea of giving different parts of a story to different characters, so that each could be read by a different person.

<sup>4</sup> The novelist "William Harrison Ainsworth was in business at that time, printing and selling magazines.



and to political ideas.<sup>1</sup> A few novelists also wrote large numbers of stories especially for children.

People read other books besides novels, of course. They read history and geography and foreign literature,<sup>2</sup> and above all they read books on religion. Religion was the key to everything. Families said prayers morning and night, and a prayer called 'grace' before and after meals. They lived with religion much more than English Christians do today.

Victorian fathers and mothers were concerned especially that Sunday, called 'the Sabbath', be kept holy. No work must be done on a Sunday, so all shops were closed. No games must be played, so all children were kept indoors. There was no entertainment, even inside the house, and it was wrong even to laugh on a Victorian Sunday. The day was given to worship, with perhaps 2 or even 3 visits to church.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Anglican church there were two divisions: 'high' church and 'low' church. 'High' church meant worship with ceremony, like the Roman Catholic mass.<sup>4</sup> 'Low' church meant a more personal and simple form of worship, like the presbyterian meetings. Presbyterians, Methodists and other nonconformists were not 'church' but 'chapel'—that is, using a room or building smaller than a church. But the difference was on the surface only. 'High' church and 'low' church was like 'Tory' and 'Whig'. Underneath the apparent difference, the British were united in a common religious faith.<sup>5</sup>

The Anglican high church was strongest in the southern counties. For each diocese there was a cathedral city. The cathedrals were ancient, and the form of worship in them had not changed for centuries. Each was at the centre of its city, or on a hill overlooking it, thus appearing

<sup>1</sup> The socialist parson Charles Kingsley wrote several of these. So also did the lawyer Charles Reade.

<sup>2</sup> Edward FitzGerald learnt Persian and translated Omar Khayyam without ever leaving England.

<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of hymns were written at this time, by John Keble, J. M. Neale and many others. Religion also affected the poetry of Christina Rossetti and (some years later) Francis Thompson.

<sup>4</sup> The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was a high church man who became a Roman Catholic priest.

<sup>5</sup> Slowly, as the years passed, this faith was shaken by the scientists. Charles Darwin, in his *On the Origin of Species*, gave a non-Christian account of the development of man. Arthur Hugh Clough was among the poets who became troubled by doubts.



to control the lives of all the citizens. A bishop was at the head of each diocese. Under him, a dean managed the cathedral with the help of a group, or 'chapter', of priests called canons. The archdeacon watched the work of the parsons, curates and deacons<sup>1</sup> in the churches of the diocese. And there was sometimes also a 'suffragan', or assistant bishop—with responsibility for a particular part of the diocese.

A large number of ordinary people were also active in the life of the church in each parish. There were the church-wardens, the sexton and the sidesmen, who were all officials working with or under the rector or vicar. There was also the rector's or vicar's wife, who usually worked for charity in the parish. The church was everywhere in a country parish, and the lives of most villagers were influenced by it.

In towns too, most Victorians applied their religious faith to problems of everyday life. Their heavy thoughts were reflected in their heavy faces. The men clothed themselves in heavy suits of black, dark brown or grey. They grew their beards long and bushy. They wore their hair long and thick.

They could never forget that they were members of a great nation. They pushed their chins up with high, stiff collars. They moved slowly, almost like kings. Their heads were crowned with 'top' hats, and generally they carried walking-sticks.

Their empire, they remembered, stretched from the far east to the far west of the world. Nothing could destroy it. The Nepal war, the Pindari war in central India, the Burmese war, the Ashanti war in west Africa, the 'kaffir' wars in south Africa, rebellion in Canada, the Afghan war, Maori wars in New Zealand, Sikh wars in India—all these might shake or check parts of it, but none had seriously affected its growth or profitability.

Now, however, came the empire's greatest test. A year after the end of the Crimean War, India rebelled. The soldiers of the East India Company's army, the sepoys, attacked and killed their British officers at Meerut. Then they marched to Delhi and captured it.

The sepoys' revolt—or the Indian 'mutiny', as the British called it—quickly spread. Sepoys gained control in Oudh, Rajputana, Rohilkhand and many parts of central India. They captured Kanpur—then spelt

<sup>1</sup> A deacon is like a curate—that is, less than a priest. But not all churchmen work in churches. Although 'Lewis Carroll', whose real name was C. L. Dodgson, became a deacon at Oxford, he continued to teach mathematics there.



‘Cawnpore’—and surrounded Lucknow. There was fierce fighting and cruelty<sup>1</sup> everywhere.

General Sir Henry Havelock marched with 2,000 men to relieve Lucknow. In 13 weeks, under the hot Indian sun and at the age of 62, he led his little army several hundred miles, and fought 12 full battles, before Lucknow was saved. Havelock was a god-fearing old gentleman, whose duty to his country killed him in the end.

The Victorians were tough, like the iron which they made. In a few months of unsparing effort, they gained back all the parts of India which had been lost, until the whole of that vast country was under their control again.

The army officers and the colonial officials were products of the public schools. These schools, which were really private—that is, non-government—schools, existed for the sons of wealthy families. Only boys who went to public schools could become future leaders of society.

They were tough places, almost like prisons. The boys slept on hard beds, rose early and washed under a cold pump even in winter. They studied in cold classrooms with stone floors, ate poor food off plain wooden tables, and were ordered and knocked about like slaves. An older boy, a prefect, could beat a smaller boy or punish him in almost any way, even for the smallest fault.

The product of an English public school was called a ‘gentleman’. He was meant to be upright, clean-living, moral and dependable. It did not matter if he was not very clever, but he must be tough and able to lead, because weakness was regarded with scorn. Thus most public school men used strong voices. They spoke in short, sharp sentences, without much feeling. Few of them showed their real feelings often, even to their families.

The oldest, and ‘best’, public schools were Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester. Among the new ones were Wellington, Marlborough, Hurstpierpoint, and Haileybury. Conditions were hard in all of them. Sports such as cricket, football, boxing and running were organized strictly. They were duties more than games.

Sometimes the public school system produced men who escaped to the empire because they could not fit into social life at home. There is an

<sup>1</sup> Lord Macaulay, who had been a member of the Indian Council, described ‘40 men blown at once from the mouths of cannon—heads, legs and arms flying in all directions’. ‘There is a terrible cry for revenge,’ he said.



old English saying that every flock of good white sheep contains one bad black one. The black sheep were the 'misfits'. Some were gamblers, some were cheats, and some were violent men. Many of them were younger sons, whose families could provide them neither with money nor with a safe future. Such men went (or were sent by their fathers) to far-away places. Australia is an example. There, in their search for wealth, they often fell into the company of criminals and common vagabonds.

Although the Victorians regarded the empire as a place full of opportunity, there were many among them whose knowledge about it was very mixed. Some of the common people still believed there were countries with strange, six-headed animals, or snakes a mile long, or bottomless holes filled with jewels and gold.

Even people who were better educated seldom troubled to learn about the colonies. The empire was huge and wide-spread, a vast area on the map. Besides, it was very far away. Most people were more interested in home news than in, for example, a rebellion in Ceylon.

Nevertheless, a growing number of thoughtful men began to realize the value of the colonies as markets for British goods. The colonies provided Britain with raw materials and then bought the manufactured articles which Britain produced.

On the other hand, some people thought, Britain spent a lot of money while preserving the colonies. A few of them therefore looked forward to the day when the colonists would be free. Then the colonists would have to manage their own affairs, and pay for them.

That applied to the European settlers in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Victorian thinkers were less sure about the local populations of non-Christian countries such as India. They thought that no nation could develop without first accepting Christianity and the western way of life. The missionaries were trying hard to persuade people that God was an Englishman, but without much success.

The East India Company merchants had mixed easily with Indians, Chinese and Malays. But all that was now at an end. The behaviour of the new kind of colonial official was stricter. He felt like a father among the people whom he ruled. They, like children, must be taught to follow his ways.

### *More reform*

Lord Derby's second ministry, which followed Lord Palmerston's



first ministry, passed the Bill which brought the East India Company to an end. India now was ruled by a 'viceroy', who received orders from the government in London. Under the new system, officers in the Indian Army and the Indian Civil Service were appointed under the crown.

Palmerston's second ministry was much concerned with foreign affairs. It supported Cavour in Italy and favoured the southern states in the American civil war. It had three main policies: to increase Britain's power in the world, to maintain a balance of power between European countries, and to support liberal ideas and causes wherever possible.<sup>1</sup> These remained Britain's general aims and objects for the rest of the century.

While Palmerston was prime minister for this second time, Prince Albert died. As a foreigner, the prince had never been loved by the British people, although they had always respected his hard work and good sense. They had also admired his kindness and loyalty to his wife, the queen.

Certainly Victoria had always loved her husband. Together she and he had provided the throne with an authority which she alone, as a middle-aged widow, could not now provide. Together, also, they had set new fashions for society. They had lived much in Scotland, at their royal castle called Balmoral. They had walked on the Scottish moors, the 'highlands', which they had made popular. Now many rich people used the highlands for sport. They shot the animals called deer, and the birds called grouse 'in season'—that is, in the autumn and winter of each year.

Victoria retired from public sight for a few years after Albert's death. She lived quietly, sometimes at Balmoral and at other times at Windsor castle. She was tired of public life and she did not like her Whig ministers. She did not like either Palmerston or his follower William Ewart Gladstone, who was a great and fiery man.

When Palmerston died, aged 81, Lord John Russell became prime minister for the second time. He was 73. And when Russell resigned a few months later, it was Gladstone who took full control of the old Whig party.

There was a need for younger men. Gladstone reformed the old Whig

<sup>1</sup> The great poet of freedom movements in Europe was Algernon Charles Swinburne. He was both a republican (against kings) and an atheist (against priests).



party. He forced new ideas on it, made it look fresher and brighter, and gave it a new name. He presented it to the electors as the new, Liberal party.

But meanwhile the Conservatives, under Lord Derby, were in power again. And when Lord Derby retired, it was Benjamin Disraeli, now older in years and in experience, who became prime minister.

These two, Gladstone the Liberal and Disraeli the Conservative, changed political life in England completely. They made it more exciting and more full of meaning and purpose, so that everybody wanted to vote either Liberal or Conservative.<sup>1</sup>

The two leaders were complete opposites. Gladstone was tall, earnest and fierce, with flashing eyes. Disraeli was neat, smooth, and a great charmer. Gladstone was strict. He thought that all actions ought to have a moral purpose. Disraeli was easy and clever. He was willing to bend and twist, if necessary, for political reasons.

Both men accepted the idea of further reform. The population had doubled in 50 years and was now over 25 millions, with the greatest increase in the industrial towns. The trade unions, with over half a million members, were still not properly recognized. The working class generally was still not represented in Parliament.

Gladstone introduced a new Reform Bill into the House of Commons. The Conservatives defeated it, and then Disraeli introduced one of his own. It was only a step towards democracy. It gave the vote to all working-class house-holders in the towns, although not to common labourers in the country. Women also failed to get the vote, but from this time forward they made continued demands for it.

The farm labourer was at the bottom of Victorian society. He lived close to the soil. He was poor, uneducated, and often ill from endless days working out in the rain and cold weather. He was slow and he was often stupid. Towns-people laughed at him, and called him a 'yokel'.

Many yokels were no better than slaves. They laboured a 16-hour day, and often their wives and children worked with them in the fields. Their cottages were damp and crowded. Some had pumps, but many families depended on a single village pump. Whole villages sometimes suffered from a landlord's neglect.

<sup>1</sup> The young man Alfred Austin, who became poet laureate after Tennyson, was an eager supporter of Disraeli.



A yokel's whole life was lived in and around his village. Most of the other villagers were his relations, and all of them spoke a kind of local English which was difficult for people from town or other districts to understand. Life was dull, especially for young people. Many of them decided to escape to the world outside, where there was opportunity. Girls became domestic servants. Young men joined the army or became factory workers. Skilled workers had the hope of regular wages and a chance to improve their positions. And then, with the new Reform Act, they might qualify for the vote.

The Liberal and Conservative parties, under Gladstone and Disraeli, were both looking for working-class support. It was the first time that had happened in English history. Both leaders were fine speakers and each attacked the other in a personal duel of words. Nothing like it had ever been heard before.

In the year following the Reform Act, the Conservatives were defeated in a general election. They resigned from government immediately. It was the first time that had happened, too. Earlier governments had resigned only when defeated in Parliament. Now it was admitted that the direct decision of the people could change a government. That was another step towards true democracy.

Gladstone became prime minister. His Liberal government was eager for social reform. It started a national system of primary education, providing for schools both in the industrial towns and in the villages. It changed the legal system, so that cases could be heard in court more quickly and more cheaply. It introduced an examination system for entry into the civil service, to attract the best men rather than the richest or those with most influence.<sup>1</sup> It ordered secret voting for future elections, so that the 2 million electors could choose their M.P.s without fear.

The duel between Gladstone and Disraeli continued in the House of Commons. Gladstone and his ministers sat on the government benches, with the mass of Liberal back-benchers behind them. Disraeli and the other Conservative leaders sat on the front row of opposition benches, facing the government from the other side of the House. In the narrow passage between the green leather benches, there was a table where the clerks sat recording the speeches, and on the table there was a wooden 'despatch box' for parliamentary papers. At the end of the passage,

<sup>1</sup> The novelist Anthony Trollope entered the post office under the old system. He found time to write and hunt, besides inventing the street post-box.



raised up on steps to control the whole House, was the Speaker's chair.

The House of Commons was thus arranged for the two-party system of democracy. It was small and quiet, a room for discussion rather than for loud speeches. The Speaker demanded politeness on all occasions.

At that time Parliament could sit for 7 years, after which there must be a general election. Or, the prime minister could ask the queen to dissolve Parliament within the 7 years. When a Member died or resigned during the life of a parliament, then there must be a by-election within his constituency to return a new Member.

During Gladstone's first ministry there were several by-elections at which Conservatives were returned in place of Liberals. Gladstone asked for a general election, hoping that his party would be returned in greater strength.

He lost. Disraeli became prime minister again.

Queen Victoria was delighted. She said that Gladstone always spoke to her as if she were at a public meeting. Victoria preferred Disraeli. He always spoke to her softly, winning her with words about the importance of her royal position.

Disraeli persuaded this lonely woman to come out from her retirement. She liked him and trusted him. She sent him bunches of little yellow flowers called primroses. Even today there is a Conservative club in England called the Primrose League.

Disraeli as prime minister wanted Britain to control the route to India and the east. His government bought controlling shares in the Suez Canal, and Disraeli made them seem like a present to the crown. Victoria gave him a title, Lord Beaconsfield. He caused her to take the title, Empress of India. He continued Palmerston's policy of supporting the Turks against the Russians, so that Britain's way through the Mediterranean would be kept clear. The iron ships of the navy were at Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus.

In home government, Lord Beaconsfield's ministry was less exciting than Gladstone's had been. Nevertheless, it performed some useful work. The greatest evil in society was still the misery of the poor. Many country labourers lived, as we have seen, almost like animals; but at least they had fresh air. Conditions in some cities were much worse. The cheap houses, built at the beginning of the industrial revolution, had grown old and dirty. The vast areas of them—called slums—were terribly overcrowded, with families living in one room. Industrial slums were



dark and smoky, and they smelt strongly of decay and human waste.

The Conservative government gave local councils power to destroy these slums. It also passed a public Health Act, forcing house-owners to obey rules for the supply of fresh water, for the clearing of dirt and waste, and for the prevention of disease.

Until this time, children were still being used as 'climbing boys', or chimney sweeps. Pushing a small boy up a chimney was cheaper than using a long brush. That evil, too, was stopped at last.

### *The Victorian family*

Nearly two-thirds of the population now lived in towns and cities. The town centres, where the factories were, remained as areas for the working class. Middle-class people, however, moved increasingly further out, into new suburbs, where the air was fresher.

These suburban families wanted detached houses surrounded by gardens and parks. Suburban roads were usually made curved rather than straight, and they were given names such as the Gardens, the Park, the Avenue, the Drive, and the Crescent.

The people in suburban homes were often newly rich, and they gave their houses grand names. Some used the names of castles and palaces—Balmoral, Belvedere, the Towers, Tintagel. Others preferred the names of great trees—the Elms, the Firs, Yew Tree Villa. Some used names which reminded them of empire—Coromandel, Shangri-la, Kismet.

Such houses were often great ugly buildings, made of dark brown brick or dark grey stone. Many of them still stand, cold and damp, over a century later.

At that time the rooms were lighted with gas-lamps which hung from the ornamental ceilings. The walls were papered with patterns of coloured flowers, or delicate birds, or perhaps medieval scenes.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the choice of pattern was influenced by Chinese or Japanese art.

Living-rooms, which were called 'drawing-rooms' or 'parlours', were generally crowded with furniture. The heavy tables were kept covered with thick cloths. Most of the chairs were stuffed for comfort. Plants in pots stood in corners, and there were pictures and ornaments everywhere.

<sup>1</sup> The poet William Morris started a business company for making domestic ornaments, including wall-paper. Often he used the work of his pre-Raphaelite friends.



The English have always liked animals in the house as pets, and thousands still keep dogs or cats. Victorian middle-class homes were usually crowded with people, also. There were servants, relations, and children. Most parents had many children. In some families, the young ones were treated strictly. They were kept in the play-room or 'nursery', for much of the day, under the care of a nurse or 'nanny'.

In July or August of every year, most rich families went by train on holiday to the seaside, staying near the beach at a boarding-house which was furnished very much like their own. A boarding-house, or 'digs', was like a small hotel. Usually it was managed by the owner, a landlady, who did much of the house-work herself.

Old seaside towns, such as Brighton and Scarborough, developed rapidly. They were called 'resorts'. New resorts, such as Blackpool, Torquay, Bournemouth, Eastbourne, Hastings, Ramsgate, Margate, Southend and Clacton, tried to compete by offering the same pleasures. They provided huts on the beach called bathing-machines, musical entertainment with a 'brass band', and perhaps a theatre or 'concert hall' also. There was usually an 'esplanade'—a wide, clean path for walking—along the back of the beach; and some resorts had a 'pier'—a path-way built out over the sea—which was used for fishing.

Summers at the seaside were generally for middle-class families only, because few workers got holidays with pay. And only rich parents could afford more than 2 or 3 weeks away from home. When these were finished, the boys were sent back to boarding-school and the rest of the family prepared for winter.

Autumn in England is the season of falling leaves and dying garden plants. Birds fly south, to warmer climates.<sup>1</sup> Fog, which is caused by damp air cooling, settles like a thick white mist, or is blackened by chimney smoke.

Fogs in big cities such as Manchester and London were made worse by the millions of coal fires used in Victorian homes. As the evenings became dark and cold, more fires were lit; until sometimes people walking in the streets could see nothing around them. On such evenings the footpads walked, and most people preferred to stay indoors, with the windows shut.

<sup>1</sup> Many writers, too, preferred to be abroad in the cold season. Edward Lear, the writer of nonsense verse, travelled in India and other warm places during much of his life.



Thus autumn and winter were the seasons for home-made entertainment. Ladies gave tea-parties for their friends, with bread-and-butter, jam and potted meat, home-made biscuits and cake.

Sometimes they gave dinner parties. The guests arrived at about 7 in the evening and left their hats and coats with the hall servant before entering the drawing-room. After some polite conversation and a glass of wine, usually 'sherry', they were led into the dining-room. The lady of the house entered first with the most important male guest, whom she seated at her right hand. The host then led the most important female guest to the opposite end of the table and seated her at his right hand. The other guests found their places marked by cards along each side of the table.<sup>1</sup> The meal consisted of several 'courses'—soup, fish, meat, 'sweet', cheese, fruit—all served by 'maids' or 'footmen'; and it lasted a long time.

The winter months—November to February—offered special pleasures to different members of the family, although women enjoyed themselves less than men.

Young ladies lived dull lives. They were not allowed to go to parties without their families or without a female guardian or 'chaperon'. They were not allowed to dance with young men unknown to the family. A young man wishing to propose marriage must ask the girl's father for permission first. If the father approved, then there was a year or more of 'engagement', during which time the girl could only receive her lover as a friend.

So Victorian girls lived most of the long winter evenings at home. Few homes had many books in them, because the English middle classes generally do not enjoy good literature.<sup>2</sup> Most Victorian mothers and fathers preferred to spend their money on practical and useful books, such as Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management* and Samuel Smiles's *Self-help*, a book for self-improvement. Girls wanted something more exciting, but many could only read books which their fathers had approved. New novels<sup>3</sup> must be borrowed from the library.

If a young lady walked for pleasure, she must go properly dressed.

<sup>1</sup> The amusing magazine *Punch* made many jokes about the social habits of rich families. The writer George du Maurier was also an artist who drew 'cartoons' for it. These cartoons were satirical. They laughed at snobs.

<sup>2</sup> Although many families had Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*.

<sup>3</sup> By Thomas Hardy, for example, or George Meredith or Samuel Butler (who should not be confused with the author of 'Hudibras').



That meant wearing a dress which reached the ground, with the skirt gathered together at the back in a 'bustle' on a wire frame. The bustle was heavy, and made sitting difficult. And underneath the dress, all the length of the body, was a wide belt called a corset, stiffened with bone supports, to keep the figure neat.

Young men dressed carefully too, although more comfortably. On their heads they wore 'bowlers', little round black hats with stiff curling rims. Their coats and trousers were dark and made with thick wool. A young fellow or 'chap' wanting to look like a dandy—now called a 'toff' or a 'swell'—often carried a walking-stick or 'cane'. And he wore 'spats'—a stiff protective covering—over his shoes.

Young chaps talked often about sports such as horse-racing, rowing and cricket. The big horse-races of each year were the Derby, a 'flat' race, and the Grand National, in which the horses jumped. The most important boat race was that between Oxford and Cambridge universities, at Putney on the river Thames. The main cricket event of the year was the 'test match' between England and Australia. Other first-class cricket was played between counties, each county having a team. W. G. Grace of Gloucestershire was the greatest player.

But these were entertainments for the spring and summer. In winter-time young men were free to enjoy the pleasures of the town. New London theatres—the Gaiety, the Vaudeville, and others—showed various sorts of entertainment.<sup>1</sup> Good serious plays were rare. People still preferred melodramas, with strong stories full of blood and tears.

Some of the acting was splendid, however. The actor Henry Irving, who managed the Lyceum theatre, employed the great actress Ellen Terry as his leading lady. The new theatres were huge and the manner of acting was 'heavy'. Stages were lit by gas and were set far from most of the audience, so the actors must use loud voices and big movements too.

The music-halls were smaller and more friendly. They were places where the entertainment was not plays but song-and-dance. They had developed from the taverns, where men had always enjoyed a cheerful song while they drank. In the 'halls', as these new music-houses were called, drinks were still served. The customers sat at small tables from which they could see the stage. Low-class women were often present,

<sup>1</sup> Including 'burlesques', 'burlettas' and 'extravaganzas', full of nonsense, wild situations, funny men and fat women. Today this sort of play is called a farce.



as companions for rich and lonely young gentlemen; but they formed a part of society which most Victorians preferred to forget.

Other gentlemen passed the evening more wisely, in their clubs.<sup>1</sup> Some clubs—the Reform, the Travellers', the Carlton, the Savage—were famous and expensive. But there were cheaper ones outside London, for example in the midlands, for middle-class men. There were even workers' clubs.

In many areas the club and the hotel, especially the railway hotel, replaced the old English inn. Public houses were seldom considered 'respectable'. Indeed many Victorians wanted to stop the sale of gin and beer,<sup>2</sup> and close the 'pubs' completely. This idea was called the 'temperance' movement. It spread widely in the midlands and in Wales, where the Methodists were strong; but generally it failed in the workers' clubs. The English workman likes a glass of beer, with his pipe of tobacco, after he has done the day's work.

Temperance was a middle-class idea and was popular among women especially. The Salvation Army was similar. It was a kind of middle-class mission to the working classes, spreading Methodist ideas of God. People joining the Salvation Army were given military rank and wore military clothes. They organized 'soup kitchens' to feed poor people and then preached religion to those who came for help. Salvation Army bands marched in the streets, playing loudly on their brass instruments to attract the crowds.

The Victorian desire to persuade other people to change their ways increased as the century continued. The Victorian father felt responsible for more than the family within his house. His duty was, he thought, to lead wherever there were people within his care. His duty was to civilize, and the manners and habits of middle-class Victorian England were the only civilization that he knew.<sup>3</sup>

### *The end of a dream*

Thus the Victorians tried to educate the world.

Britons must be respected everywhere. Ten years earlier, Ethiopia—

<sup>1</sup> The writer of amusing and curious verse, Charles Stuart Calverley, was a frequent user of clubs.

<sup>2</sup> The poet James Thomson (not to be confused with the author of *The Seasons*) died from too much drink.

<sup>3</sup> But Europe was 'civilized'. Austin Dobson and Andrew Lang were introducing French verse forms into England.



then called Abyssinia—had been invaded as punishment for its emperor's treatment of two British diplomats. The emperor Theodore's city, Magdala, had been destroyed.

Britons must earn the respect which they demanded. Fifteen years earlier, the Chinese government (which was friendly to Britain) had been threatened by the Taiping rebellion. The British government sent Major Gordon to help it defeat the rebels. Britain must support its friends.

People causing trouble must be taught the strength of Britain's power. Five years earlier, Colonel Garnet Wolseley had been sent to West Africa to punish the Ashanti. He reached the Ashanti city of Kumasi, and burned it down.<sup>1</sup>

Violence must be met with violence, and force with force. A state of mind called jingoism had developed among the British. The feeling was expressed in a music-hall song, at a time when Lord Beaconsfield was supporting the Turks in their war against the Russians:

We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do,

We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too!

That was certainly the Conservative view. Gladstone put forward the opposite, liberal view. He wanted freedom for all the little Balkan countries, such as Bulgaria, threatened both by Turkey and by Russia.

Public opinion was divided. But when the Russians reached Constantinople, there was a general cry against them. The excitement became like a fever, especially in London. Beaconsfield ordered a fleet of iron battleships into the Dardanelles to stop the Russian advance.

The British route to the east through the Suez Canal must be protected. The Russians had threatened India for many years. Only the mountains of Afghanistan and India's north-west frontier blocked their way to this most valuable part of Britain's empire. The British Indian army had guarded the frontier around the Khyber Pass during the 35 years since the first Afghan war. Now it invaded Afghanistan, and the second Afghan war began.

At the same time, the jingoists were glad to see the empire being extended in South Africa. A British army marched from Natal<sup>2</sup> into Zululand. It was beaten badly by the Zulu army at the battle of Isandhlwana, but a few soldiers held back thousands of victorious Zulus from

<sup>1</sup> The writer G. A. Henty was a newspaper reporter in this Ashanti war.

<sup>2</sup> Where the writer Rider Haggard lived for several years.



crossing the river border at Rorke's Drift, and Natal was saved. Later, Sir Garnet Wolseley conquered Zululand with 10,000 fresh soldiers sent from Britain.

Gladstone spoke earnestly against all these things. He was against jingoism because he thought that Britain had no right to interfere with other countries. He decided to fight in the next election from the constituency of Midlothian in Scotland. And in his 'Midlothian campaign', as it was called, he proposed a liberal policy of home rule even for countries such as Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

The Midlothian campaign is important in English history. It was the first time that a leading statesman had offered his policies direct to the people for approval. It was a Liberal promise of direct democratic rule.

The Conservatives were defeated, and Lord Beaconsfield died soon afterwards. Gladstone himself was over 70 when he became prime minister of a Liberal government for this second time.

The Boers of South Africa were among those who had been excited by Gladstone's words about home rule. They wanted independence for their homeland, the Transvaal. But now Gladstone hesitated. There were many Britons in the Transvaal, and they must be protected.

Meanwhile, the Boers would not wait. They rebelled, and killed about 100 British soldiers at the battle of Majuba Hill.

The jingoists complained bitterly. The queen too was shocked. Suddenly Gladstone was less popular than he had been before.

Everywhere there was trouble for the Liberal government. At home, bad harvests and the import of cheap American corn had affected British farming. Thousands of farm labourers were without work and left the land.

But there was unemployment also in the towns and cities. The rate of economic growth generally was slowing down. Britain had depended too much on its lead over other nations earlier in the century. Now industry, like farming, was becoming affected more and more by foreign competition. The Victorian dream that England could do things better than any other country was coming to an end. A feeling of uncertainty developed.

Coal-mining was the only main industry in which Britain still led rival countries. In most others the Victorians were now slipping behind. For example, American and German steel was entering export markets which before had been served by British iron. Electric lighting was now



used widely in Europe, while Britain continued to depend mainly on gas. The first telephone message had been sent by a Scotsman, but the use of telephones was not developed as well in Britain as in America. Typewriters were more common in America, too. Photography was now used frequently, but most of the cameras used in Britain were made abroad.

Britain was no longer ahead of other countries, either, with means for travel. The development of railways had meant the neglect of roads. The country roads were almost empty, except for local traffic such as farmers' carts and light one-horse carriages, called 'traps'. France was quick to develop the motor-car, while in England a law said that no horseless carriage must go at more than 4 miles an hour. A steam-car had been invented, but anybody wanting to drive one on the roads must hire a man with a red flag to walk in front!

The most popular means for travelling short distances was the bicycle. The first Victorian bicycle was called a 'bone-shaker'. It had wooden wheels with iron tyres. This developed into an iron machine with solid rubber tyres. A new shape was the 'penny-farthing', with a huge front wheel—the penny—and a very small back one—the farthing, or quarter-penny coin.

Although many sorts of machines and tools were now being produced, the factories which made them were generally small. Most businesses were still managed by families or 'partners'. Nevertheless, an increasing number of businesses were becoming limited companies.

A limited company was sometimes a public company, shares in which were bought and sold on the London stock exchange. It was managed by a board of directors elected by the share-holders, the owners of the business. Share-holders needed less knowledge of the business than the old kind of single owner needed, because their risk was limited to the sum of money which each had put into the company. And even directors with large share-holdings had less interest than the single owner, who had risked everything. Thus few directors were as close to the factory floor as the old kind of family owner had been, and few cared as much about the factory workers. Management generally became more and more separated from labour.

Workers were treated like machines. Employers limited wages according to the law of supply and demand. They got as much labour as possible for the smallest wage that the worker could be made to accept.



That was the basis of the Victorian economic system. Many workers were paid only for what they produced; and few were allowed paid holidays, except for the 'Bank holidays'—4 single days in the year when the banks were closed by law.

More and more labourers joined trade unions, and more and more union leaders tried to enter politics. The ideas of socialism spread. A few professional people, such as writers and university teachers, tried to help the working class. They formed a socialist group called the Fabian Society.<sup>1</sup>

The Fabians believed that socialism would come gradually and peacefully, rather than by violence and revolution. They preferred the idea of parliamentary democracy to Karl Marx's idea of a working-class state. The Fabians, like the radicals, wanted votes for all workmen in the country.

A new Reform Bill was introduced by the Gladstone government, giving the vote to all farm-workers. The House of Lords almost refused to pass it, because the Conservative party feared losing the mainly farming constituencies in the north and west. But Gladstone's Liberals threatened to reduce the power of the Lords if they did not pass it, and so the Bill became an Act.

This Reform Act increased the number of voters from 3 million to 5 million, five men out of every seven now having a representative in Parliament. The Liberal strength was greatest in the north and west, especially in Scotland and Wales. The Conservative strength remained greatest in the wealthier 'home counties'—near London—and generally in the south.

Although Gladstone pleased the radicals with his reform policy, his foreign policy did not please them. There had been riots against the British in Egypt, and Gladstone had sent an army there. That had pleased the jingoists. A year later there was a revolution in the Sudan, and the jingoists declared that an army must be sent there too.

Instead Gladstone sent a single officer, General 'Chinese' Gordon.

After his victory over the Taiping rebels in China, Gordon had become a hero to the British people. He seemed the best kind of colonial officer—brave, daring and romantic, but severely religious. Now he was sent up the river Nile and arrived in Khartoum, where he was quickly surrounded by the Arab army under its leader, the Mahdi.

<sup>1</sup> The young writer George Bernard Shaw was one of them.



Soon Gordon was asking for help against the *faqirs*, or 'dervishes', as the Mahdi's soldiers were called.

Queen Victoria and the Conservatives demanded the speedy rescue of Britain's hero. But Gladstone delayed too long. Several months passed while an army moved from Egypt up the Nile, and it arrived too late. The Mahdi and his dervishes had entered Khartoum two days earlier. The place was ruined, and Gordon was dead.

There was a great shout of anger when the news reached London. Even ordinary people were disgusted that the government had been so weak. The queen was so upset that she became ill. Gladstone, who had been known for many years as the 'grand old man', was now called the 'murderer of Gordon'.

While the defeat at Khartoum made the Liberals unpopular, events nearer home nearly destroyed them. Trouble in Ireland, 'John Bull's other island', had increased year after year. For nearly 20 years the Irish had been demanding complete independence, or home rule, and their anger had led to political murder and revolt.

In England, the demand for Irish home rule came from the Irish nationalist M.P.s at Westminster. Under their leader, Parnell, they joined with the radicals; and together the Irish and the radicals helped the Conservatives to defeat Gladstone's government.

The prime minister now was Lord Salisbury, whose greatest interests were the empire and foreign affairs. Gladstone in opposition thought about nothing except Irish home rule. After a few months, when he was back in power, he introduced a Home Rule Bill in a speech which lasted  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

The Bill split his party. In the Commons, 93 Liberals voted against it, against their own government. Gladstone demanded a general election; and he fought that election purely on the question of Irish home rule. He lost it, and resigned.

### *The 'naughty nineties'*

Thus the conservative Lord Salisbury came back into power. His programme for the next 6 years was strong rule in Ireland and a careful strengthening of Britain's position generally overseas.

The Conservative policy at home was a safe one, with few reforms. Local government was organized on the basis of county councils, each of which became responsible for much of the work of the town and



parish councils under its control. For example, roads within each county were maintained directly by the county council. So also were the county schools. Employment of children under the age of 11 was stopped, and their education in county primary schools became free.

But middle-class parents continued to pay for their children to go to private schools, because only children whose education was bought for them were able to go on to university.<sup>1</sup> England remained a much more pleasant country for rich people than for the poor.

The way of life for many rich people was changing. They were beginning to regard the early Victorians with scorn. Their fathers had lived strictly. They, the children, wanted fun. The centre of entertainment was London. There, especially in the area around Piccadilly and the Strand—the ‘West End’—were bright lights, fine restaurants and gay theatres.<sup>2</sup>

In London too, in the district called Chelsea, the painters led by an American, James Whistler, showed pictures which were a revolution in art. Chelsea was the home of ‘bohemians’—young painters, writers and actors who wore their hair long, dressed in colourful clothes, and behaved in a manner which often shocked ordinary men and women.<sup>3</sup>

The bohemians led the change in moral ideas. Those who followed first were those who could afford to follow. The upper class in London was rich and fashionable. It was called ‘high society’. It was determined to enjoy itself.

Ladies and gentlemen in high society ate their dinners at the fashionable hour of 7 o’clock. They drank French wines, white with fish and red with meat, and finished their meals with coffee and strong sweet drinks called liqueurs. They always dressed specially for dinner, the gentlemen changing into black-and-white evening clothes. Even the waiters wore ‘tails’—long black coats with ends like fish-tails.

The best time for entertainment was after dinner. Usually a gentleman took his lady to the theatre in a ‘hansom cab’, a two-wheeled taxi for

<sup>1</sup> Thus no writers at this time were from the working class. H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett both came from lower middle-class families, and neither of them succeeded without a struggle.

<sup>2</sup> At one of them, the Savoy, the writer W. S. Gilbert and his companion Sir Arthur Sullivan presented their famous ‘light operas’, which were musical plays full of amusing nonsense and satirical fun.

<sup>3</sup> Many famous writers lived in Chelsea too, including Oscar Wilde, George Moore and the American novelist Henry James.



two persons, pulled by one horse, with the driver sitting on a seat above and behind the roof of the cab. A private carriage was called a 'brougham' or a 'landau'. Only a few people yet had a horseless carriage, or motor-car.

Many of the theatres were lit by electricity now, and the plays had changed too. The new ones<sup>1</sup> often represented real life, with all its every-day problems and prejudices. They were called 'straight' plays. Sometimes they shocked their audiences, but after so many years of romantic drama they came like a breath of fresh air.

Life itself was changing. For upper-class women, birth control was now possible. Many ladies limited the number of their children to two or three. With small families they had more time and money to enjoy themselves. They were able to live in smaller houses, reducing the need for house-keepers, cooks and maids.

Birth control also helped young ladies to keep their waists narrow. A 'good figure' was a mark of beauty. Most ladies wore corsets or 'stays' under their dresses to keep their stomachs in.

Many of the Victorian rules for women even of the middle class were disappearing. A woman whose husband behaved badly, for example by going away with another woman, could now obtain a divorce. Women could even go out to work. Girls became secretaries and telephone operators. They used teashops, or cafes, and walked at lunch-time in the London parks. They travelled alone in the underground trains, on the horse- and steam-buses, and on the new electric trams, which moved on rails.

Young men wore gay clothes to attract the pretty faces. In summer they put on short sporting coats and little white straw hats called 'boaters'. They went boating and cycling with their girl-friends, played against them at tennis and at golf, and whispered sweet and secret words to them on seats in parks.

The last 10 years of the century became known as the 'naughty nineties'. Instead of church on Sundays there were now 'week-ends out of town', which were not always innocent. And in the naughty nineties there was more freedom in manners and speech, as in morals generally, than there had been for nearly 100 years.

Much of the change in fashion centred round Victoria's eldest son Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. The prince was a man who liked

<sup>1</sup> For example, the plays of Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero.



people. After the death of his father, whose name he was given, he travelled widely and became friendly with people of many different sorts and opinions. By the time 'Bertie' Edward was 50, he was a man of the world, with ideas which were shocking to stricter Victorians. He enjoyed a gay life, and risked the anger of his ageing mother by leading society towards pleasures such as horse-racing, the theatres and the gambling clubs.

The bohemians, who had done so much to change moral ideas, now attempted to change fashions, and then habits. A three-monthly paper called *The Yellow Book* appeared. It contained many 'modern' drawings by a new young artist named Aubrey Beardsley. It also contained much new writing<sup>1</sup> of a sort which was different from anything that had been seen before.

Writers and artists introduced the idea of 'aesthetics'—the study of beauty. Aesthetes believed in 'art for art's sake'—that is, that beauty in art is as valuable as beauty in life. They believed also that beauty in life should be society's main aim. Some of them therefore behaved in an extraordinary manner, dressing themselves in flowing silk clothes and offending sensible men and women with foolish talk and idle habits.

People complained that bohemians and aesthetes were having a bad effect on society. Aesthetic ideas were generally nonsense, these people said, and they were taking attention away from things which mattered more. Socialist thinkers were concerned about the shape and condition of society.<sup>2</sup> They worried about the lack of equality in it. The jingoists and imperialists—believers in empire—were concerned more with its strength.<sup>3</sup>

### *Socialists and imperialists*

These were the two main streams of political development in the nineties: socialism and imperialism. Each affected the whole of English history for the next 50 years. Without them England would be a different place today.

<sup>1</sup> Such as Max Beerbohm's. The poets William Watson and Ernest Dowson also wrote for *The Yellow Book*.

<sup>2</sup> The novelist George Gissing is an example of a writer who at this time was concerned almost totally with the condition of poor people.

<sup>3</sup> The poets W. E. Henley and Rudyard Kipling are generally known as imperialist poets. Two others, Sir Henry Newbolt and W. S. Blunt, have been called jingoists.



The socialist movement and the trade unions were gaining strength steadily. There were now unions for gas workers, railways workers, coal-miners, brick-layers, general labourers and many others. Increasingly they bargained for better wages and improved working conditions. Sometimes workers went on strike, stopped work, when employers failed to meet their demands. Then the unions concerned arranged mass meetings of their members at which the situation was discussed. A union's money was obtained from its members. Some unions used the money to pay workers on strike, workers who were sick, and those who were without work and on the dole.

Some workers now worked for only 8 hours a day. Some now had a holiday on Saturday afternoons. Many of them watched association football, or 'soccer', played by 'professional'—or paid—footballers. Soccer is the game favoured most by the lower classes in England. An audience of thousands of cloth-capped workers round a soccer field is often a foreigner's first view of English socialist society.

Socialism reached Parliament when about a dozen working-class M.P.s were elected to Westminster. During Gladstone's fourth ministry, one of them, Keir Hardie, organized a new party: the Independent Labour Party. Its mark was the socialist red flag.

Gladstone was an old man of 83 when he formed his fourth and last ministry.<sup>1</sup> Still he was determined to give home rule to Ireland, but again he failed. Soon afterwards he retired from public life, a sick and disappointed man. He had been 63 years in the House of Commons, but there were few, even in his own party, who were sorry to see him go.

The new Liberal prime minister was Lord Rosebery, an extremely rich peer who, like the Prince of Wales, owned race-horses. Politically, Rosebery's position was impossible. Unlike most of his party, he was an imperialist; and unlike most other peers, he wanted reform of the House of Lords. Rosebery's government resigned after a year, and Lord Salisbury became prime minister again.

Salisbury's new ministry was a coalition of 340 Conservatives and 71 Liberal Unionists. The Liberal Unionists had risen from that group of Liberals which had split from Gladstone because of his plans for Irish home rule.

<sup>1</sup> As the result of an election in which Anthony Hope failed to win a seat. His real name was Anthony Hope Hawkins. He was a firm Liberal, competing in a strongly Conservative constituency.



These Unionists, who wanted to keep the union of Ireland with Britain, were led by a man named Joseph Chamberlain, a clever and successful politician from the middle class.

Chamberlain had succeeded first as a radical. As mayor of the industrial city of Birmingham he had made many useful local reforms. Then he had been voted into the House of Commons as M.P. for Birmingham. In English politics, every main party contains men with widely different views—that is, each has its ‘right’ and ‘left’ wing. Chamberlain had led the ‘left’ or radical wing of Gladstone’s Liberal party. But although he had been nearly a socialist at home, his ideas for overseas were clearly imperialist. Now this curious man agreed to serve as a minister in Lord Salisbury’s mainly Conservative government. He became Colonial Secretary.

The position was important because the colonies were important and the empire was still growing. Burma, Malaya, Borneo, New Guinea and the Fiji islands had all been added to it. Under Chamberlain, imperialist ideas now became very strong.

Every Briton with an interest in foreign affairs knew that his country was a great power in the world. Every Briton knew too that his country was an island, whose history had been made on the world’s seas. As reminders of Britain’s central position there were Cook’s Tours to Europe in the south, trade with America in the west, and the ever-growing Colonial Service in the east. There was also the race with other European countries to gain Africa. All these things made people interested in foreign places and in imperial power.

Thousands of people had travelled widely overseas for various purposes.<sup>1</sup> Even those who could not travel were delighted with books which joined geography with history. Novels of romantic adventure at sea or in a foreign land were bought in large numbers.<sup>2</sup> Many were sold in cheap ‘pocket’ size; and boys particularly enjoyed the exciting stories which they contained.

Many of these stories were about the glory of empire, ‘on which the sun never sets’. Sometimes the hero was the brave British soldier, known as ‘Tommy’ or ‘Tommy Atkins’, a familiar name in England.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the novelist R. L. Stevenson in the Pacific, the poet Robert Bridges in Egypt and Syria, and the seaman-novelist Joseph Conrad in Asia and Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson’s books had been among the first and best of these.



But more often the hero was an officer, the lonely white man in some far country, defending his empire under the hot tropical sun. Even the maps in school geography books were exciting, with the dominions and colonies coloured red.

The idea of empire attracted a great mass of ordinary people in the middle classes. Their own lives were dull. Every day thousands of black-coated office workers and shop assistants made the crowded journey into town and home again, back to dull houses in dull suburbs. Their pattern of living never changed. For them, the empire was excitement. It meant movement, action, adventure, and a sense of power.

Thus imperialism was important in British politics. It was strong particularly in the Conservative party. Those who opposed it, especially among the radical Liberals and the socialists, were regarded by the others with scorn. They became known as 'Little Englanders'.

The main attention was now on Africa. In West and East Africa, the colonial borders were being drawn. In South Africa they formed a circle round the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

British power in southern Africa had been extended by the imperialist Cecil Rhodes, a businessman with a big interest in the Kimberley diamond mines. Rhodes wanted power, and he quickly became prime minister of Cape Colony. His dream of empire included a railway from Cape Town to Cairo which would stretch all the way through land controlled by Britishers. Already British farmers were settling in the country which today is called Zambia, north of the Zambesi river. But the Boers, in their two republics, stood in the middle of the way.

In the same year that Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary, Rhodes tried to overcome the Boer republics. In one of them, the Transvaal, there were many British, mostly workers in the gold-mines. Rhodes wanted these workers to rebel against the Boer government. Two days after Christmas in that year, Rhodes's friend Dr Jameson led nearly 500 horsemen on an invasion of the Transvaal. But the gold-miners refused to rise, and early in January bold Dr Jameson and his men were captured by the angry Boers. The Jameson Raid, as it was called later, had failed.

Rhodes resigned. Chamberlain, who was also accused of supporting the raid, did not resign. Instead he tried to talk to the Boers, who remained angry at his imperialist policy.

Chamberlain was determined to increase colonial control over Africa.



‘British from Cairo to the Cape’ was a grand dream to all except Little Englanders. Already Lord Salisbury and the Conservatives had marked out an empire which included Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Zambia and Malawi. Now the key was Egypt, and control over the Sudan.

The British army in Egypt, commanded by General Kitchener, prepared to invade south. First it defeated the ‘dervishes’, the Sudanese *faqirs*, in a ‘river war’ on the banks of the Nile. Then it began to advance south towards Khartoum, along the line of the river.

In England, meanwhile, Queen Victoria was enjoying her Diamond Jubilee, with ceremonies to mark the sixtieth year of her reign. Important persons from all over the empire were there, to attend parties at Buckingham Palace and follow the queen on her royal drive through the streets of London. There were colonial prime ministers and governors, eastern princes and African chiefs. The crown was at the head of the empire, which was now at the height of its glory. There was no greater power in the world. The British ‘Tommies’ now conquering in the Sudan were proof of the nation’s strength.

General Kitchener met and defeated the main dervish army at Omdurman, across the river from Khartoum, in a particularly bloody battle. The power of the Mahdist leader, the Khalifa, was destroyed. The Mahdist victory over Gordon, 13 years earlier, was revenged.

After the battle of Omdurman, Kitchener went on up the Nile to meet a group of Frenchmen who had arrived at a place named Fashoda. Both France and England claimed possession of Fashoda, from where the Nile water could be controlled. For several months the two countries quarrelled about the place, and almost reached the edge of war.

In England, Kitchener was a hero. His victory at Omdurman had shown, people thought proudly, that Englishmen always win in the end.

This idea of the empire at war spread quickly in England, like a disease. Only the Little Englanders opposed it. Most people supported a new war which started on the north-west frontier of India, in the region of Malakand and the Khyber Pass. They also accepted the need for a last Ashanti war in the Gold Coast, or Ghana. They became excited too about the terrible Boxer Rising—or rebellion—in China, and about the relief of the Europeans who had been trapped in Peking.

### *The Boer War*

All these events were reported, in large type and pictures, by a new



‘popular’ newspaper, the *Daily Mail*. Thousands of ordinary people—clerks, secretaries and journeymen—read the *Mail*, which cost only half a penny. Lord Salisbury described it scornfully as a paper ‘written by office-boys for office-boys’.

But the owner of the *Daily Mail* knew very well that society was changing. There were millions of people now educated well enough to form opinions on most matters. Nevertheless they wanted news which was exciting and full of personal human interest. Thus the *Mail*, and later popular papers, included news about sport, entertainment and crime.

Crime seemed more important now that it had ever been before. There were nearly 40,000 policemen, and a special criminal investigation department (the C.I.D.) near the Thames in London at New Scotland Yard. Twenty or thirty people were hanged for murder every year,<sup>1</sup> and wax models of many of them were put on show at Madame Tussaud’s ‘waxworks museum’ in Baker Street. At the lower end of the criminal scale, dozens of street-thieves, or ‘pick-pockets’, mixed with the crowds spending money in the shops of the West End.

There were always plenty of street entertainers to amuse the crowds in the area of Piccadilly and Leicester Square. There were ‘buskers’, offering magic tricks, funny stories, song and dance. There was the ‘organ-grinder’, a man with a mechanical music organ and a monkey in a red coat and hat sitting on top of it. The monkey took the hat round, after the performance, to collect pennies. There were women, too—‘flower-girls’—who sold sweet-smelling roses, violets, carnations and lavender for button-holes. And there were old men selling matches, and young boys—‘boot-blacks’—offering to polish and shine the public’s shoes and boots.

Most of these street people were ‘cockneys’ from the East End of London—a district with slums, river-side store-buildings, and a pub in almost every road. Cockneys were the common people of Victorian London. Most of them were desperately poor. They had hard, loud voices and spoke a kind of English which few visitors can understand, even today.

But cockneys are proud and often clever. In Victorian days many of them made money by selling cheap goods—pots, cotton clothes, pins and needles, vegetables, fruit and fish—off small carts, or ‘barrows’,

<sup>1</sup> The Victorian street ballads, which the poet A. E. Housman read, form a record of many famous hangings through nearly 50 years.



pushed by hand or pulled by donkey. Some of their street markets are famous: Berwick Market, The Cut, Petticoat Lane. Cockneys with barrows were called 'costers' or 'coster-mongers'.<sup>1</sup>

On fine days in summer, especially on August Bank Holiday, thousands of Londoners enjoyed the sun on Hampstead Heath. This huge park in the north of London is a place with hills, woods, pools and plenty of open spaces for fairs and entertainment. Flower-girls, coster-mongers, gipsies, buskers, pick-pockets and beggars all mixed with the holiday crowds on the Heath. Many also went to Epsom Downs, the open grassy slopes south of London, where the Derby race is run.

Hampstead Heath and Epsom Downs were good places for families with children. The air was clean and fresh. The entertainment often included brass bands, Punch and Judy, and perhaps a circus.

Circuses were popular all over England. They travelled from one part of the country to another, the huge tent, the animals and the seats for the audience carried in 'caravans'. The tent was set in a field outside a country town, usually a few days before market-day. Smaller tents with side-shows were sometimes set around it, so that the circus became the centre of a fair.

But out-of-door circuses and fairs are summer entertainments. In winter-time there was pantomime, the season for which started on Boxing Day, a Bank holiday—the day after Christmas. Pantomimes were performed in theatres, but they were no more like plays than fairy stories are like novels. The stories which they told<sup>2</sup> were full of magic and were interrupted by dances and songs. The hero, the 'principal boy', was performed by a girl clothed as a young man. The main funny character, an old woman, the 'dame', was performed by a man.<sup>3</sup>

As the century ended, the most popular form of entertainment in the theatre was the musical play. 'Musical comedies', as they were called, were expensively staged shows, with splendid scenery, colourful clothes, and rows and rows of beautiful 'chorus' girls. The tunes were gay and lovely, too. But the words of many of them reflected the changing times. For example, there was a marching song:

<sup>1</sup> The word is as old as Shakespeare, and so are cockneys. Their history is the history of London.

<sup>2</sup> *Cinderella, Mother Goose, Aladdin and Jack and the Beanstalk*, for example.

<sup>3</sup> The Victorians liked nonsense. Fathers as much as children enjoyed the work of Lewis Carroll. *Alice in Wonderland* is a sort of literary pantomime.



When we say we've *always* won,  
And when they ask us how it's done,  
We'll proudly point to every one  
Of England's Soldiers of the Queen!

The 'soldiers of the Queen' had not fought a big war for more than 40 years. They had been beaten by the Boers at Majuba Hill 18 years earlier, and now the British public was eager for revenge. The Boers were only farmers. Their leader, Kruger, was an old man. The paper *Punch* told its readers that, faced by the British army, Kruger and his Boers would all fall over their own rifles.

But the Boers knew that the British wanted their land. The Boers were good farmers, and they were tough. There were only 80,000 able to fight; but they felt strong enough to attack south, out of the Transvaal, surrounding British soldiers and civilians in Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith. The Boers fought in small groups called 'commandos', each group travelling long distances on fast little horses. They shot far and straight with quick-firing guns.

The news of their commando successes was a great shock to Lord Salisbury's Conservative government. Britain in its empire was like a great lion, the king of the forest, whom all the other animals feared. Now the South African springbok was biting the lion's tail.

Many Liberals, especially the Little Englanders, sympathized with the Boers. They regarded them as a small but brave nation struggling against the might of British imperialism. Nevertheless, the mass of Englishmen were soon waving flags and shouting for a bigger war effort. The queen was 'not interested in the possibilities of defeat'. The Prince of Wales wanted to 'use every effort in our power to prove victorious in the end'. But people in other countries watched the struggle with disgust.

Two famous generals, Roberts and Kitchener, were sent to South Africa with thousands more soldiers, all dressed in 'khaki' earth-coloured cloth. Soon there were 4 British for every 1 Boer, and the new regiments began to drive the commandos back to the north.<sup>1</sup> They relieved Kimberley, Ladysmith and at last Mafeking, by driving the Boers away.

Everyone went wild when news of the relief of Mafeking reached London. The night sky was red with the light of bonfires. Young women

<sup>1</sup> The successful novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle served as a doctor with the British army in the Boer War.



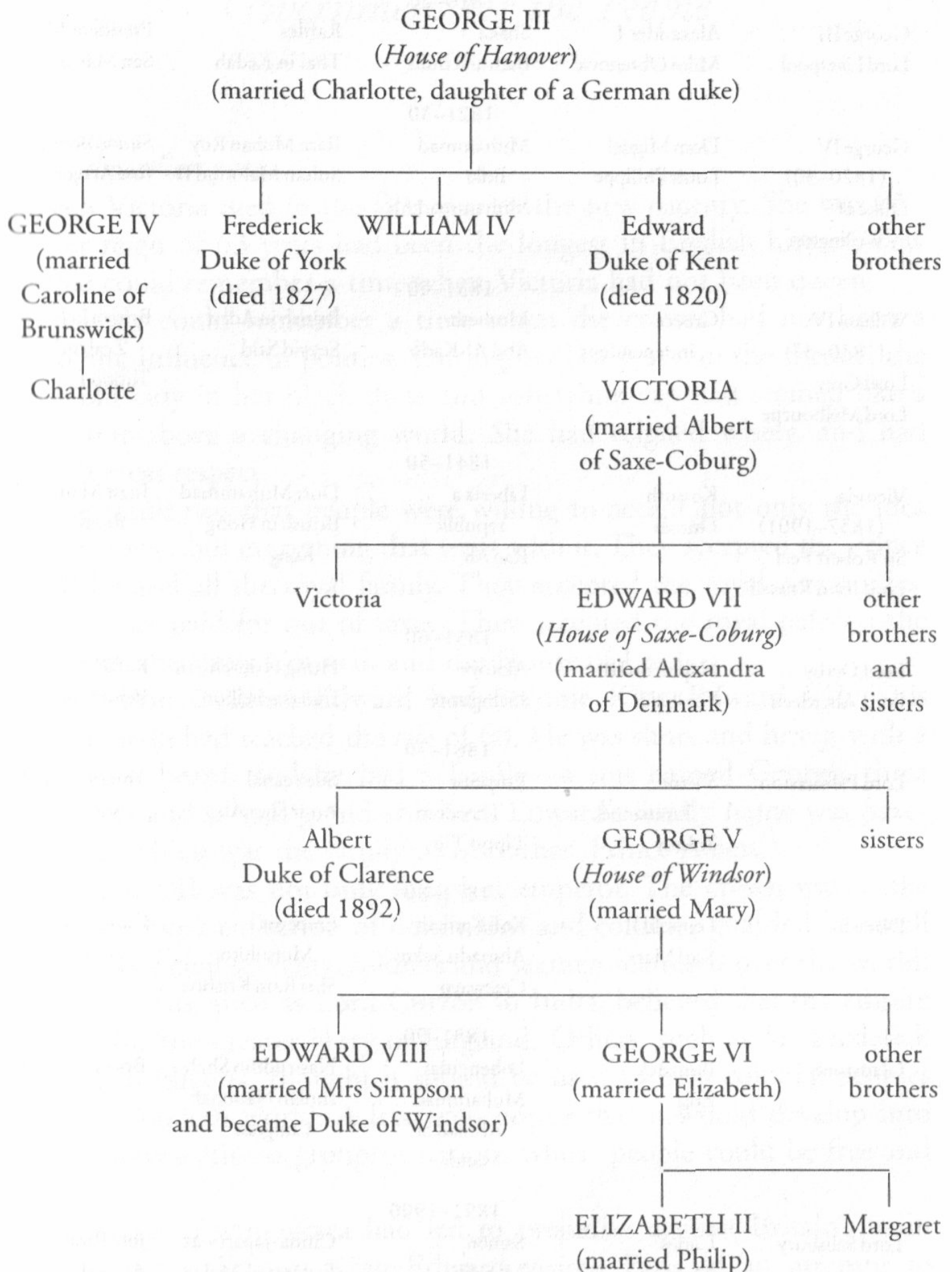
danced on the roofs of taxi-cabs. People drank wine in the streets. They thought the war was won.

But 'Mafeking night' was the end of the gay time. The lists of dead and wounded began to come in. And the Boers were still not defeated. They hid in farmhouses and huts, coming out only at night to cut railways, destroy trains, explode store-houses and attack lonely British camps. So the war went on, and the longer it continued, the more bloody and unpopular it became.

In England, a 'khaki' election was fought. Chamberlain warned the electors: 'Every seat in Parliament lost to the government is a seat gained to the Boers.' The government was successful and Salisbury and Chamberlain decided to continue the struggle until the war was won.



# HANOVER, SAXE-COBURG, AND WINDSOR



*Note:* This plan covers chapters 7–9.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 8

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
1816–20				
George III Lord Liverpool	Alexander I Milos Obrenovic	Shaka Bathurst built	Raffles Thai in Kedah	President Monroe San Martin
1821–30				
George IV (1820–30) Duke of Wellington	Dom Miguel Louis Philippe	Muhammad Bello Muhammad Ali	Ram Mohan Roy Sultan Mahmud II	Simon Bolivar José Artigas
1831–40				
William IV (1830–37) Lord Grey Lord Melbourne	Greece independent	Moshesh Abd Al-Kadir	British in Aden Seyyid Said	British in New Zealand Tupou I
1841–50				
Victoria (1837–1901) Sir Robert Peel Lord John Russell	Kossuth Dumas	Liberia a republic Rao Ali	Dost Muhammad British in Hong Kong	Juan Manuel de Rosas
1851–60				
Lord Derby Lord Aberdeen	Napoleon III Garibaldi	Akitoye Livingstone	Hung Hsiu-chuan India's rebellion	Rafael Carrera Benito Juarez
1861–70				
Lord Palmerston	Victor Emmanuel Tolstoy	Emperor Theodore Tippu Tip	Suez canal Amir Sher Ali	American civil war
1871–80				
Disraeli	Leopold II Karl Marx	Kofi Karikari Ahmadu Seku Cetewayo	Emperor Mutsuhito Shri Ram Krishna	Canada a dominion
1881–90				
Gladstone	Bismarck Zola	Lobengula Muhammad Ahmad al Mahdi	Nasiruddin Shah Indian National Congress	Brazil a republic
1891–1900				
Lord Salisbury	Carlos Marconi	Samori Menelik	China-Japan war Federated Malay States	José Rizal Australia a dominion



## *Government for the People*

### *The Edwardian poor*

Queen Victoria died in the first year of the new century. She was 81.

Her reign of 63 years had been the longest in English history. Few people could remember a time when Victoria had not been queen.

Nobody could remember a time when the crown had not been a steadying influence in politics. During her last years on the throne, the little old lady in her black dress and soft white cap had seemed like a fixed star above a changing world. She had reigned wisely, and had earned great respect.

The result was that people were willing to accept not only the idea of the crown, but everything that went with it. They accepted the Prince of Wales and all the royal family. They accepted the royal ceremonies, which were paid for out of taxes. They accepted the royal palaces, the courtiers, the Privy Council, and the House of Lords.

Now Prince Albert Edward had become King Edward VII. This friendly man had reached the age of 60. He was short and heavy, with a thick grey beard, and he had a family—a son named George, three daughters and several grand-children. Edward's family name was Saxe-Coburg, which was the family of his father, Prince Albert.<sup>1</sup>

Edward VII was not only king but emperor. The crown was at the head of a loose collection of dominions and colonies guarded by small numbers of civil servants, soldiers and seamen scattered over the world. Some officials, such as Lord Curzon in India, believed that the empire existed for the greater glory of England. Others, such as Sir Frederick Lugard in Nigeria, thought it should be used to help colonial peoples into the modern world. A few even hoped that it would develop into a commonwealth—a group of nations whose people could be free and equal.

The race to win Africa had led to prejudice against Britain's main colonial rival, France. King Edward visited Paris in an attempt to

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 313.



improve understanding between the two countries. He was a good diplomat, and the visit was a success. Soon after it, an agreement was reached between the two governments. It was called the *Entente Cordiale*, a friendly understanding between neighbours. The newspapers called Edward, 'the peace-maker'.

Many Edwardians were worried by their empire. It was too big. The Boer War had shown that they were not strong enough to hold it for ever. Britain is a tiny island, and the people in it like small things. They favour other small countries, small towns and villages, small cottages and gardens, baby children, and small dogs and birds. People were becoming tired of their imperial responsibilities.

There were enough troubles at home.

The population had nearly doubled in 50 years. It was now 37 million. Too many people were living in slums and grey suburbs, spread in wide belts round the centres of industrial cities.

Life for very poor people was still terrible.<sup>1</sup> In the 'sweat shops' they stood crowded together, sweating over their work. They cut leather for shoes and boots, or sewed buttons on shirts and dresses, working for 12 or more hours a day. Many of them, men and women, had no place to sleep. Sleeping out in the city streets was against the law, although walking the streets at night was not. So 'night-walkers' were people who were always being 'moved on' by the police. Often they tried to hide for a few hours' rest. They lay down in door-ways, under bridges, behind bushes on the Embankment at the side of the Thames, and in the churches—particularly at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London's Trafalgar Square. Many lay wrapped in newspapers to keep out the cold.

On May Day—or 'Labour Day'—in spring, workmen met in Hyde Park to sing the socialist song called 'the Red Flag'. They were the workers from the factories. Some of them were skilled men, and many of them were members of trade unions. They supported the Independent Labour Party.

The factories now offered more employment than ever before. More and more people departed from the countryside to work in them. Import of foreign food, such as American corn, had led to an agricultural slump. Ploughed land was abandoned to grass and weeds. Farm buildings decayed.

<sup>1</sup> The poet Wilfrid Gibson began life as a social worker in the 'East End', the poorest area of London.



The ribbon-like suburban roads were carrying an increasing number of motor-cars into the quiet countryside, and were spoiling it. Fewer and fewer of the little villages were now either peaceful or contented, although they still appeared attractive on picture-postcards. Many farming landlords could no longer afford to keep labourers in cottages, and pushed them out. Thus some villages were almost empty, except for a few old yokels and the servants working at the landlord's house.

Most of the remaining farmers employed their own families. The farmer cut hedges, dug ditches and brought in the cows. His wife helped him milk. His children fed the chickens and perhaps caught the horse, so that the milk could be taken round the district and sold. Some farmers kept pigs, also, to sell at market. And in hilly places where the grass is short—such as the Cotswold hills in Gloucestershire, and the Sussex 'downs'—there were still a few shepherds with their sheep.

In a few districts, too, the blacksmith remained. His trade was putting shoes on horses and, increasingly, mending tools and farm machinery. The blacksmith worked on an iron block called an anvil. His shop—'the smithy'—was a dark, hot, dusty place. It was full of the smell of burning ashes and the ringing sound of the blacksmith's hammer as it struck the red-hot iron.

The blacksmith or 'smith' is remembered in England because he was one of the last skilled persons making things with their hands. More and more the factories were mass-producing articles by machine. Some of these articles were cheap, but many of them were badly planned and ugly. England was changing, and changing too fast for people to realize what was happening.

There was change everywhere. Bicycles, or 'bikes', were followed by motor-bicycles, or 'motor-bikes'. Telephones were put in many houses. Cheap books, costing no more than sixpence each, were sold from the railway bookstalls. Libraries spread. Now a man could even educate himself in his own home.

School education developed with the passing of an Education Act which made local councils responsible for all state secondary education. This included technical education—that is, the study of mechanical and other industrial skills.

Nevertheless, only boys from rich families could hope to pass through Oxford and Cambridge universities. And both universities were controlled by conservative old men. They made sure that socialism was not



taught. Society must be kept safe for its 'natural' leaders—that is, gentlemen born to lead and to rule.

### *The Edwardian rich*

There was moral change besides economic change at this time.

Although many older people still stuck to stiff Victorian ideas about morals, younger men and women increasingly ignored them. And while most older people stuck to strict ideas about behaviour—which, they said, was either 'correct' or it was not—more and more young people thought differently. The bohemians had shown the way to behaviour of a different kind.<sup>1</sup>

Family prayers, morning and evening, gradually disappeared. Many people now went to church only to be christened, married or buried. Instead of church on Sunday mornings, there was opportunity for telephone conversations with neighbours and friends. A lot of people now thought more about psychology—the science of human nature—than about religion.<sup>2</sup> They realized that behaviour is influenced more by human desires and the cells of the body than by moral rules.

Upper-class ideas about art and ornament were also changing. A kind of painting called *art nouveau*, 'new art', became popular among rich people. *Art nouveau*, imported from France, was simple and delicate. Soon it spread from pictures to the making of wall-paper in light, faded colours. Then it spread to the making of furniture with soft curves and delicate legs.

Rich people had a lot of time for entertainment. They enjoyed reading the latest adventure stories, including many from America. Novels were even turned into plays and shown in the theatre.<sup>3</sup>

Modern drama was in the hands of the actor-managers. These famous people were actors who managed their own theatres.<sup>4</sup> Often they chose

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Alfred Austin was poet laureate at that time because he was the most 'respectable' poet, and not because he was the best. Francis Thompson lived a wild life, and John Davidson also was outside 'good' society. W. B. Yeats the greatest poet of those years, was an Irishman.

<sup>2</sup> Havelock Ellis's volumes, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, became a popular scientific work.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Stanley Weyman's *Under the Red Robe* and Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

<sup>4</sup> The playwright and Shakespearean critic Harley Granville-Barker was an actor-manager. He produced plays by Yeats, Galsworthy, Massfield and many other writers of that time, including himself.



plays in which they acted the chief characters. They were good businessmen. They knew the sorts of play which the public wanted. 'Cup and saucer' dramas—plays with real, domestic situations—were very popular. There were also romantic plays and special plays for children,<sup>1</sup> particularly at Christmas time.

The music-hall, too, developed during these years. Some of the great London halls—the Alhambra, the Tivoli, the Coliseum, the Palace—were like palaces. They had thick red carpets, soft seats, gold-painted ornaments on the walls and ceilings, and hundreds of brightly shining electric lights. Those with the largest stages, offering various scenes, claimed the grand name, 'variety' theatre.

The performers danced and sang, and many of their songs became famous. Both music-hall and 'variety' were popular with people of all classes.<sup>2</sup> The songs were repeated in the smaller halls of the north of England, and were whistled and sung by ordinary people all over the country. Many of the performers' jokes were 'class' jokes, reflecting the envy of poor people for the 'toffs', the upper classes.

The Edwardian 'toffs' were in a good position. The old land-owning families of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had married their children into the families of manufacturers made rich by the industrial revolution. Rich people now had income from large businesses, besides capital in land.

Many of them had both a town house and a country house with a large estate.

The chief servant in a rich man's house was the butler. (Many butlers behaved like lords, and there were many jokes about them on the music-halls and in magazines.) Another important servant was the valet, who took care of the rich man's clothes and sometimes was a real friend to him. And in very large houses there were occasionally footmen, too.

The Edwardian upper classes liked ceremony. Huge parties were given at town houses during the London 'season'; and one of a footman's duties was to 'announce'—call out with a loud voice—the names of visiting guests. The guests went up great staircases, at the top of which their

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* was one of the first and most successful plays for children.

<sup>2</sup> Some writers, such as the clever and amusing Max Beerbohm, admired the halls. Others, such as the poetess Alice Meynell, thought the performances coarse and rough. Certainly many of the songs and jokes were rude.



host and his lady stood ready to greet them as they entered the ballroom.

On most evenings during the season, the streets of the rich district called Mayfair were filled with carriages; although parties and balls in Mayfair were not the only entertainment of the upper classes. The whole of the West End was their playground. For example, there were splendid meals at famous restaurants such as Rules's, Gatti's, Romano's in the Strand, the Trocadero and, most famous of all, the Café Royal<sup>1</sup> in Regent Street. Money could buy an hour or two of gay music under bright lights almost anywhere in London's West End.

Thus wealthy businessmen of the middle class also enjoyed evenings of entertainment in 'town', as London was called. Most of them 'went up' there from the suburbs where they lived. The main suburbs now were Harrow and Finchley to the north-west and north of London; Twickenham to the west; Putney and Surbiton to the southwest; and Wimbledon, Sutton, Croydon, Purley, Dulwich and Bromley to the south. These suburbs were 'safe'. They were away from the ugly sights of working-class areas, although equally they were away from high society and the mansions of the upper class.

Suburban husbands lived comfortably but artificially, neither like lords nor like men who work with their hands in the open air. They protected their wives from radical ideas, and suburban wives became more and more conservative. Many were snobs, still thinking for example that it was bad socially for a young man to go into trade, like a shop-keeper. The wives of professional men such as lawyers, doctors and civil servants looked down on the wives of manufacturers and businessmen. There was little mixing of interests.

In summer these suburban people enjoyed being out of doors. Their houses had large gardens, and some of them had tennis-courts. Several of the suburbs contained parks. The game called golf became popular. Land was bought and developed into large, green and grassy golf-courses. Saturday afternoon was the main time for golf. Increasingly businessmen, particularly stock-brokers, enjoyed the exercise of hitting a small hard ball from one hole to the next. Suburban areas with golf-courses became known as 'stock-broker belts' round cities.

Englishmen had not lost their love of being in the countryside. Country sports were popular with most rich people. Their country

<sup>1</sup> Which was often used by writers, including the two friends Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. E. V. Lucas went there, too.



houses were often used for week-end 'house-parties', at which the guests stayed for two or three nights.

The guests arrived by car and train, carrying a large load of bags. They brought sporting guns, fishing-rods, cricket-bats, tennis-racquets or hunting clothes, according to place and season. Generally the country clothes of rich people were made of rough woollen cloth called 'tweed'. These were worn during the day. For dinner in the evening, gentlemen and ladies always 'changed' into evening clothes.

Hosts arranged many different sorts of entertainment. Sometimes the smooth grass lawns around the house were used for 'croquet'—a gentle game in which wooden balls are knocked with wooden clubs through a line of small iron holes called 'hoops'. Sometimes there was even a garden-party, a kind of expensive picnic. Large tents, called 'marquees', were put up on the lawn. Everybody dressed in their best clothes, the ladies wearing huge wide hats ornamented with artificial flowers, soft silk or even ostrich feathers. Most of the gentry in the district were usually invited to a garden-party.

In the evenings, especially at Christmas-time, large families and their guests played indoor games. Often they played 'charades', an acting game in which the players have to guess the word or name which is being performed.

The restful English countryside was a change and a relief after the bright lights of London. In spring and summer the hedge-rows were alive with wild flowers and the song of birds. The visitor might see, on his host's estate, a house or farm built three or more centuries earlier. He might find, hidden in the woods, the ruins of a medieval abbey. Or, in some places, there might be a view of an old windmill on a distant hill, its 'sails' still turning lazily in the quiet air. Most people enjoyed the ancient beauty of the countryside. They envied the country land-owner who lived in it. Many noted that the 'shires', particularly the southern counties, were good places to retire to.

One of the most popular sports at a week-end party in a country house was the land-owner's 'shoot'. Servants called 'beaters' hit the bushes with sticks and drove the birds into the air. The birds were then shot as they passed over the line of guests with guns. Game-shooting was a favourite sport of Edward VII's son, Prince George, and many wealthy people copied him.

'Game' is the meat of the birds and animals which are shot for sport.



It was (and still is) valued highly; and most landlords employed a 'game-keeper' to protect their estates from poachers. Often a two-man war, between game-keeper and poacher, was part of the continuing life of a country district. It was fought secretly and silently, and often at night, among the hedges, trees and bushes. Even fishes in the stream were poached sometimes. Any poacher who was caught soon found himself in the court of the local magistrate.

Another treat for guests at a country house was the fox-hunt. The landlord was usually the 'master' of the hunt, and the horsemen in red coats (which are always called 'pink') were his tenants and servants. The manager of the hunt was called the 'huntsman'. The chief assistant was the 'whipper in'; he controlled the dogs (which are always called 'hounds') with his whip. The other members of the hunt, the guests and neighbours, followed on their horses, while the hounds tried to catch the fast-running fox.

Hunting, shooting and fishing were all considered proper sports for gentlemen. They were the marks by which the county families showed their greatness, although all had become rather pale imitations of the same sports in the past. The gentry were trying to copy what their grandfathers had done more easily and with more freedom. They were deceiving themselves, or only pretending to be great.

Social and political changes were affecting this ruling class rapidly. The feudal system, which kept landlord above tenant, had gone long ago. Birth into a ruling family was no longer enough alone to make a man great. A person's place in society was now decided more and more by his own effort. Increasingly, men of humble birth, educated in the grammar schools, were competing with the gentry. Some of them had already reached important positions in industry, business, politics and even in the civil service.

Nevertheless, there were still many squires, governors, admirals and generals, and even company directors, living in an idle, easy way, with little care for the future. They were living with the belief that society was fixed. They knew that it was becoming increasingly difficult to live like a lord on 500 or 600 pounds a year. Their wives knew that it was becoming more and more difficult to get servants for a few shillings a week. But few realized how much the growth of democracy was threatening their whole way of life.

Many such people heard the voice of the working class only once a



year. In the evenings before Christmas, poor children went in groups to the front doors of rich houses. There they stood, their breath steaming in the cold night air. They sang Christmas hymns called carols, until the door opened and a servant, or perhaps even the lady of the house, put food or money into their hands.

But for other people, especially in the industrial towns, the voice of the working class was very clear. It was heard all the year: the low roar of masses pressing steadily upwards from below.

### *Steps towards democracy*

Thus it was a time both of change and of refusal to recognize change. The workers were pressing, but those above were unwilling to move.

The laws which governed English society at that time were old-fashioned and severe. Although they protected society, by protecting property, they did not make it better. The Conservatives had held power for many years; and in all that time they had done little to face the problem raised by scientific, industrial and educational progress. Now it was to be the turn of the Liberals, supported by Labour.

Lord Salisbury had been followed as Conservative prime minister by A. J. Balfour. Three years later there was a general election at which the Liberals defeated the Conservatives completely. The leader of the Liberal opposition, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, became prime minister.

Another result of this general election was a great increase in the strength of the Labour party. There were now over 30 Labour M.P.s in the House of Commons, reflecting the growing power of the working class. These Labour M.P.s were eager for reform and agreed to support Campbell-Bannerman's government, which had many reforms waiting to be pushed through Parliament.

However, reforms could become law only after they had been approved by the House of Lords, and that upper house was full of Tory peers. (The Conservatives were still sometimes called Tories, and they still are at the present time.)

Again and again the Conservatives in the Lords blocked Bills passed by the Liberal majority in the Commons. Campbell-Bannerman died and H. H. Asquith became prime minister, leading one of the finest governments England has ever known. It contained many great ministers, among whom was a fiery Welshman named David Lloyd George. He was Asquith's chancellor of the exchequer and he introduced



a 'people's budget' which many of the Lords thought too revolutionary. They refused to pass it.

This budget aimed to collect taxes to pay for a state pension plan for old people and also for several other social services. It was a truly reforming Bill and was important not only to Asquith and Lloyd George but to Labour and the mass of the people. When the Lords blocked it, Asquith demanded another general election which again the Liberals won. Thus supported, the Liberal government prepared for battle with the House of Lords.

The death of King Edward at that time brought his son to the throne as George V.<sup>1</sup> Asquith asked the young king whether he would be prepared to make several hundred Liberal peers, to equal the balance of parties in the House of Lords, if yet another general election showed support for Liberal policy. The king agreed. This third election showed that support, and within a few months Asquith introduced a Parliament Bill which limited the Lords' power.

After much hesitation, the Lords accepted the Bill. It was better than the threat to flood the upper House with Liberal peers. But the resulting Act meant that the Lords could only delay Bills passed by the lower House; they could no longer refuse them completely.

This Parliament Act also reduced the life-time of a parliament from 7 years to 5, which meant that no government could stay in power for more than 5 years without giving the people an opportunity to change it.

The Act was one of the great steps, made at that time, along the road to true democracy. There were others, too. One of them was made as a result of the growth of trade unions.

The industrial cities were slums. A million coal-miners lived in thousands of rows of black little cottages near the coal-pits of Durham, Yorkshire and south Wales. Thousands more cottages stretched for miles along the banks of the oily river Tyne, near Newcastle, where small cargo-boats called tramp-steamers, or 'tramps', were made. Factories towered high above roof-tops in the wool towns of Leeds, Halifax, Huddersfield and Rochdale. Store-houses were mixed among the dirty mass of cottages in the cotton towns of Bolton, Burnley, Oldham and Wigan. The chimneys of the pottery towns—Tunstall, Burslem, Hartley, Stoke and Longton—produced great clouds of black

<sup>1</sup> After whom 'Georgian poetry' is named. The first volume of Georgian poetry contained verse by Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, D. H. Lawrence and others.



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and white smoke. The slums here were endless. In all the midlands of England, there was dirt, heat and noise. The roar of factory fires, the crash of machinery and the clatter of trains and trams, all mixed together and sounded like thunder in a storm.

There were only two classes of people in such places: the employers and the employed. They faced each other with suspicion and often with hatred. There were strikes and there were riots. Hundreds of soldiers and policemen were sent to control rioting coal-miners in the Rhondda valley of south Wales. The miners in Tonypany village met the police with stones, iron bars, and sticks with nails. Their fight became known in English working-class history as 'the battle of Tonypany'.

The workers smelled power. Nearly 4 million of them belonged to trade unions which were becoming increasingly better organized. A Trades Union Congress—a joining together of various trade unions—had been formed. It was known as the 'T.U.C.'. Now an Act of Parliament allowed unions to spend money on sending members to Westminster. The T.U.C. became the back-bone of the Labour party. Politics were developing as a struggle between the classes.

There was also another step towards democracy made at that time: the demand for votes for women.

More and more women were coming out of their homes into society. They worked in offices and performed many public services. More and more were becoming better educated.<sup>1</sup> More and more were learning to enjoy themselves, equally with men. They went with their boy-friends to hotel dances and to the new silent cinema films. They went, often independently of men, to drink tea at the restaurants of the big shops called 'department stores'. The game of billiards—played by men with long sticks and red and white balls on a cloth-covered table—disappeared from private houses, because women preferred tennis in the garden. Women learned to drive cars. They wore their skirts shorter, above the ankle. They smoked cigarettes.

Now women wanted the same pay as men for equal work. They wanted society to recognize the development they had made. They wanted complete emancipation and, above all, the vote.

The demand for emancipation and the right to vote at elections was

<sup>1</sup> Many women now read books and went to the theatre. To interest them, writers such as Arnold Bennett, E. M. Forster, John Galsworthy and Somerset Maugham put many main female characters into their novels and plays.



made for all women by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her two daughters Christabel and Sylvia. The Pankhursts and their friends led a group of women in a fierce effort to obtain these things. It was called the 'suffragette movement'.

The suffragettes were noisy and violent. They marched in the streets, interrupted the public meetings of government ministers, chained themselves to street lamp-posts, broke the glass of shop windows, set fire to public buildings, and generally caused as much nuisance as possible. They attracted a lot of public attention, particularly when policemen on horses were sent to prevent their riots. One suffragette even threw herself under King George's race-horse at the Derby and was killed.

The first years of George V's reign were very violent ones. Besides the riots of strikers and suffragettes, there was fresh trouble with the Irish, who were again demanding home rule. The people of Ulster, in the north of Ireland, were protestants, however. They did not want independence with the Irish catholics. They preferred to remain joined in union with the United Kingdom. The Unionist M.P.s at Westminster supported the Conservatives, who were also against home rule, and the opposition to the Liberals was thus known as the 'Conservative and Unionist' party. For a few months, this opposition was on the edge of rebellion against Asquith's government.

The general feeling for violence at that time was reflected in a number of fashions which quickly became popular. It was apparent, for example, in the 'variety' hall and the ballroom. There, for many years, the graceful waltz had been popular. Now a new kind of music arrived from America: 'rag-time', a sort of early jazz. Young people loved it. It was fast, noisy, and completely different from anything their parents had known.

Rag-time at tea-dances and in 'night-clubs' was especially popular with young girls called 'flappers'. Night-clubs were for drinking besides dancing; and flappers enjoyed all such daring new things. They smoked, and sometimes they drank too much. They went with their boy-friends to see 'rag-time revues'.<sup>1</sup> They rode behind their boy-friends on the back seats of motor-bikes. Some even drove cars. Flappers were the despair of their worried mothers.

Older people generally were shocked by the social and moral revolu-

<sup>1</sup> Max Pemberton, the writer of adventure stories, was the author of the words of several of these stage shows.



tion. Often the apparent cause of it—rag-time and films and ideas about social equality—came from America. In fact it was the beginning of an American invasion of the English cultural and social scene.<sup>1</sup> The whole English way of life became, from now forward, more and more like that in the United States. It became faster-moving, more outward-looking, rougher and more extreme.

The English are seldom extreme in politics. They usually regard struggles for power as outside the main stream of public life. But the class struggle was becoming more violent. The years were full of both social and political bitterness. Even leading politicians, such as Lloyd George, were using strong and angry language at their meetings. Labour was the party of the 'left'; Conservatives (or 'Unionists') were the party of the 'right'. 'Labour' and 'capital' were becoming increasingly divided. Asquith's Liberals stood awkwardly between.

The event which delayed further division, and indeed gave the appearance of unity during the next few years, was the nation's first struggle against Germany. It was part of what is now known as the Great War, or World War I.

That war came suddenly and unexpectedly. It hit England like a shock, when most Englishmen were thinking of nothing more serious than their summer holidays.

### *England in the First World War*

Britain's main effort in the Great War was against Germany. The German invasion of Belgium was considered to be a direct threat to the safety of the island. Many people in England regarded the Flanders area, on the other side of the Channel, as the island's first line of defence. British armies had fought there before in history. Now Lord Kitchener, the war minister, persuaded thousands of young men to enter the army quickly and meet the German threat.

The 'Tommies' came from every part of society. There were factory workers, shop-assistants, salesmen and clerks. People generally not only accepted but even welcomed the war. The khaki-clothed soldiers were cheered and blessed by parents, sisters, girl-friends and wives as they were packed into trains at Victoria station for the journey to the Channel ports and across by ship to France.

<sup>1</sup> And of the English language. The new poet laureate, Robert Bridges, started a Society for Pure English at about that time.



Britain's allies were the French. They were called 'froggies' by the Tommies, who laughed at their enjoyment of frogs' legs as food. The enemy was called 'Jerry' or 'the Hun', the wild German of the ancient past; and the German king was known as 'Kaiser Bill'. The hopeful Tommies expected to race across Belgium and Germany to Berlin, and capture the Kaiser, all within a few weeks. Already they sang songs of victory. The war seemed an adventure, like a crusade, during that first summer. 'It will be finished by Christmas,' the newspapers said.

In fact the Great War lasted for more than 4 years. Over 700,000 Tommies died, and thousands more were wounded, or were poisoned by gas, or suffered from 'shell-shock' which caused sickness of the brain. The Great War became the most terrible war that the islanders had ever known.

Britain's second enemy was Turkey.<sup>1</sup> The dominions and colonies of the empire were brought into the fight against the Turks. Indian soldiers were used in Mesopotamia, which is present-day Iraq. Australians and New Zealanders landed with the British in an unsuccessful attack at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles.<sup>2</sup> And meanwhile many South Africans fought against German colonists in Africa.

But the greatest struggle was on 'the Western Front'. This was the area of north-west France and eastern Belgium which the Germans were trying to conquer.

In the first year the British lost men at Mons (1,600 Tommies killed and wounded), on the river Marne, and at Ypres. These were battles of movement, with the generals on both sides using cavalry and horse-pulled guns.

Then winter came, and the war became stuck down in the Flanders mud. The armies dug deep ditches which were called 'trenches'. The front of each trench was protected with 'barbed' wire, curled wire with sharp points. Often a trench was only a few dozen metres from the nearest trenches of 'the Huns', whose voices were often heard. The Tommies sat for months in the trenches, trying to keep their rifles, machine-guns and hand-bombs—called 'grenades'—clean and dry.

In the second year of the war the British commander, Field-Marshal Sir John French, tried to break the German line at Neuve Chapelle, but

<sup>1</sup> Turkey was better known then among Englishmen than today. James Flecker was one of many who worked there before the war.

<sup>2</sup> Where the English soldier-poet Rupert Brooke was going when he died.



failed. The Germans tried to break the British line at Ypres, but they failed too. It was a strange, sour sort of war.

Sir John French complained of a shortage of shells for his heavy guns. Lloyd George, who was the most active minister in Asquith's government, became responsible for increasing the production of shells and other supplies. He put thousands of men and women to work in factories. This part of the war effort became known as 'the Home Front'.

The power of the state over the ordinary citizen developed. At the start of the war people had been allowed to continue 'business as usual', although with new paper money—pound notes—rather than with gold coins. But now nearly everybody in the nation was affected by the government and the war. Controls and rules began to govern industry, agriculture, the professions and trade.

The war was getting worse and worse. German submarines, which were called 'U-boats', were sinking British ships. Among the latter was the *Lusitania*, a large ship carrying many innocent passengers. And, while German battleships shot at towns on the English coast, German airships—called Zeppelins—dropped bombs on London. People in Sussex, Surrey and Kent, the south-eastern counties of England, often heard the thunder of big guns from the Western Front. The danger everywhere seemed great.

When Sir John French unsuccessfully attacked the German line at Loos, he lost 50,000 Tommies dead and wounded. He was replaced. Another field-marshal, Sir Douglas Haig, was given command of the British armies in France.

Haig was a famous soldier. He was straight, square and popular. He was determined to win the war by killing as many Huns as possible.

Unhappily, however, Haig could not kill Germans without wasting British lives too. Again and again he sent his men 'over the top'—that is, out of the mud of their trenches, over the earth wall, through the wire and across the shell-holed area of 'no-man's land' towards the Jerry lines. These attacks were led by young officers, often fresh from the military college at Sandhurst. Waving pistols and shouting at their men, they rushed forward through the smoke, many of them falling dead just short of the German machine-guns. A special medal, the Military Cross, was given to officers for such brave acts.<sup>1</sup> In this way the English upper

<sup>1</sup> Among many officers who won the M.C. were the soldier-poets Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden.



and middle classes risked most of their future leaders, and lost many of them.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the best men were lost in the navy, the service in which the English have most pride. At the battle of Jutland, in the North Sea, 14 ships were sunk. Others went to the bottom of the sea in the continuous fight against U-boats and the floating bombs called 'mines'.

The third year of the war brought only sorrow and disappointment. The War Office—the government department responsible for military affairs—sent telegrams to the nearest relations of men killed. The newspapers also reported lists of 'casualties', as they were called. The battle of the river Somme (400,000 dead and wounded) filled the papers and the mails for weeks, and led to great bitterness. The trenches were, it seemed, becoming rivers of blood.

The spirit of the Tommies was changing, too. Many now hesitated before following their officers in an attack. Some of them invented songs which were criticisms of their own generals, whom they called 'brass hats'. Often such criticisms extended to questions about the whole value of the struggle.

There were many people in England who objected to the war. They were peace-loving people, who thought that nothing, not even defeat, was worse than war. They were called 'conscientious objectors'. Some of them went to prison rather than join the army and fight. On the other hand, there were plenty of people who wanted the war effort increased. They demanded victory over Germany as quickly as possible.

The gentlemanly Asquith fell from power, and Lloyd George became prime minister. He was a man of great purpose, whose own efforts had carried him to the top. Now he used his efforts for one purpose only: to win the war.

Lloyd George brought the management of the war under central government control. He was full of good ideas. For example, he made sure that merchant ships bringing supplies to British ports were protected from U-boats. They must sail in groups, called 'convoys', in the company of armed warships. More ships must be built for the merchant navy, to replace losses, and heavy guns must be built upon their decks.

More coal was mined, and more steel was made. The workers were

<sup>1</sup>Julian Grenfell (who died of wounds early in the war), Wilfred Owen (who was killed a week before it finished), Robert Graves and the other war poets were nearly all officers. Only Isaac Rosenberg was a common soldier.



cared for, too. Food was rationed—that is, rich people were prevented from buying all of it—so that there would be enough for everyone. Poor people were protected from rising prices. And, although some businessmen seized more than a fair share of profit from the sale of military supplies, rich people generally were prevented from gaining too much wealth. In other words, under Lloyd George—‘the man of the people’—socialism progressed.

There was a great effort to develop national unity and determination. George V changed the name of the royal family from Saxe-Coburg to the English name Windsor. He became extremely popular. Few people now doubted that victory would be won ‘for king and country’.

But the war went on in its third year. The trenches on the 80-mile-long Western Front became deeper, wetter and muddier. The battle of Arras (140,000 British dead and wounded) was followed by a particularly bloody attack by Canadians against German-held high ground on Vimy ridge. Haig attacked again at Ypres, and the result was the terrible battle of Passchendaele (another 300,000 dead and wounded).

The use of aeroplanes and tanks, both of which were new weapons, might have won the war; but the early aeroplanes were at the mercy of wind and rain, and the army’s heavy and slow-moving tanks soon sank in the mud.

Tanks were not used successfully until late that year, at the battle of Cambrai. There, where the ground was hard, they pushed through the wire and across the trenches. For the first time, the German line was broken.

Aeroplanes were used mainly for ‘scouting’, for seeing what was behind the enemy lines. Later they were used increasingly for bombing, and the Royal Air Force was formed. Small, light aeroplanes were used to support army attacks on the ground. Fights between groups of aircraft in the sky above the trenches, shooting at each other with machine-guns, were called ‘dog-fights’. These became a familiar sight towards the end of the war.

After Cambrai, many people began to think that total victory was near. One ally had been lost, because the Marxist revolution had taken Russia out of the war. But another ally—America—was in. More and more American soldiers and airmen were reaching Europe every week.

In the Middle East, Turkey was losing ground. British armies were in Baghdad and Jerusalem. The Arabs in the desert had rebelled against the



Turks. A British hero, T. E. Lawrence,<sup>1</sup> was working with them. Lawrence was more admired in England than in Arabia; his habit of wearing Arab clothes made him seem romantic. Much of his work was undone when Palestine was declared a national home for the Jews.

In Europe, meanwhile, Germany was not yet beaten. In the spring of the last year of the war, a huge German attack pushed the French on the Western Front back to the river Marne. The British were driven from Ypres and back to the Somme. Now, however, over 600,000 American soldiers were helping the allies, and masses of tanks were being used to support the allied infantry. The German advance slowed in the summer, and in the autumn the French, British and Americans began to move towards Germany.

Peace came in November. The trenches became quiet for the first time in 4 years. In England, work stopped in factories and shops and offices, as people poured into the streets.

They thought that the war which they had won, at so much cost, was 'the war to end all wars'.

### *The 'gay twenties'*

Lloyd George told the people that an effort must now be made to make England 'a fit country for heroes to live in'.

The soldiers were coming home. Many were wounded, lacking an arm or a leg, or with their health ruined. Some of them sold cheap things, such as matches, on the streets of London and other big cities. Others waited on street corners, singing or playing tunes on cheap instruments, begging 'the price of a drink' from passing crowds. Many more, hoping for a brighter future, returned to the factories and shops which they had left. Some of these discovered that other, younger men had been given their work.

Some people, mostly of the middle class, looked back to the years before the war and called that time 'the good old days'. They wanted the new England to be as much like the old England as possible. But many others, especially poorly paid workers such as miners and railwaymen, were looking forward to a better life. They wanted safe employment, with better wages, cleaner houses, insurance against ill health and old age, and more education for their children.

<sup>1</sup> 'Lawrence of Arabia', as he was called, wrote one famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. He should not be confused with D. H. Lawrence, the poet and novelist.



Some workers looked towards 'red' Russia, where such things had been promised from the revolution. More, however, were content with a paler red. They were 'pink' socialists. They looked towards the British trade unions for a peaceful settlement of their demands.

The Labour party grew rapidly. It gained much of its strength from the Liberals, who were split now between Asquith and Lloyd George. The Liberal party was crushed between Conservatives on the right wing and Labour on the left. It never formed a government again.

Lloyd George had been supported in power by a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals. The coalition fell when a group of Conservatives met at the Carlton Club and decided to refuse their support. Now the Conservatives ruled alone, first under their leader, Bonar Law, and then, when he died, under a new leader, Stanley Baldwin.

Then a fresh election brought Labour to power with a new prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald. Middle-class people were very frightened. They were afraid that a socialist government would take their money, destroy their position in society, and dismiss the king. When none of those things happened, they looked for other faults. They accused the Labour party of being influenced by the Russian government.

At yet another general election, the third within 2 years, the Conservatives under Stanley Baldwin were voted back to power. Baldwin was a quiet, comfortable person. He farmed pigs, and he smoked a pipe. Now he promised a peaceful time in politics under a safe, right-wing government.

British socialism under MacDonald had proved to be a mild and easy kind. Now the Conservatives showed that they were not extreme either. During the war, and under Lloyd George, the influence of the government over ordinary people's lives had been much extended. Compared with America, England was almost a socialist state. The Conservatives accepted this situation. They could not avoid the necessity of continuing to tax the rich to help the poor. They could not turn the hands of the clock back to the years before the war.

There had been many changes since the war. All men and most women over the age of 21 now had the vote. The suffragettes' demand for the rights of women in society had been largely met. Other problems too were solved after a bitter fight. The Irish had gained independent home rule, leaving only Ulster still under the crown. India also was stirring,



and the word 'Commonwealth' began to be heard in discussions of colonial affairs. The old ideas of wealth and empire were disappearing.

Wealth in England was still not spread fairly, however. The richest person in every 200 owned about as much property as all the other 199 put together. And while the idle rich did not need work, more than a million working men could not get work. The unemployed lived 'on the dole'. Thousands stood for long hours outside government offices called 'labour exchanges'. Others, tired of waiting for employment, sat hopelessly at home.

And while children from rich families went to good public schools and universities, millions of other young people were still only partly educated. Nearly all of them could read and write, but only a few of them had any real interest in the arts or sciences. They were educated to enjoy only the lower forms of literature, such as picture papers and magazines.

Much of the popular entertainment came from America.<sup>1</sup> There were American films at the cinema and American dance tunes on the radio, which people then called 'the wireless'. But soon the BBC—the British Broadcasting Company, which later became a Corporation—was offering a choice of serious programmes too. It broadcast classical music, plays and 'talks'. Many good writers worked for the BBC,<sup>2</sup> and the manner in which their words and sentences were pronounced was soon regarded by middle-class people as the 'correct' way of speaking the language.

Thus the BBC set good standards and helped to bring the nation together. Otherwise the ruling classes continued to neglect those underneath. The Conservative government supported big business. Parliament was full of a lot of hard-faced men who had done very well out of the war. Many bankers, stock-brokers and company directors continued to get more money than they earned. While many poor people still lived in disgusting slums, businessmen continued to enjoy life in comfortable suburbs. Their wives still had servants. Their sons and daughters, living too soon in rooms or flats of their own, were without care or

<sup>1</sup> So also did much fine writing, however, including poetry. T. S. Eliot was an American who became British.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Noyes, for example, wrote the first poem broadcast from the BBC's high-powered station at Daventry.



responsibility. Mayfair was still the most fashionable London district, and the most exciting.<sup>1</sup>

Young people who enjoyed spending money were called 'the bright young things'. The girls, the 'flappers', had a freedom even greater than before the war. They wore loose, easy dresses which hung straight down and ended slightly below the knee. They cut their hair short and wore long necklaces threaded with beads or pearls. They drank 'cocktails'—short drinks made from mixed spirits—at 'cocktail parties'. They kicked their feet up in the new dances; the tango, the foxtrot and the Charleston. Many older people still thought that all such things were shocking.

At cocktail parties, people stood and talked from 6.30 onwards. Then, later in the evening, they had dinner and still they talked. After dinner they went to theatres and to night-clubs. A night-club usually had a singer and a small jazz band, which played most of the night.<sup>2</sup> The bright young things went to such places in couples or in groups. They drank, they danced the new steps, and they talked.

The gay nineteen-twenties was an age of talk. The fashion was to talk in a clever and amusing way, without ever becoming serious. Rich young men who did no work but enjoyed themselves all the time were called 'play-boys'. They 'flirted' with—that is, they playfully suggested love to—as many girls as possible. They drove fast cars, they gambled, and they resisted authority. Students, for example, liked climbing college buildings in the dark.

The young men and women who followed the fashion worked desperately at being 'gay', and their feelings for each other were seldom either sincere or deep. Often they separated early in married life, and divorces multiplied. Their part of society seemed full of a kind of bitter sadness under its hard smooth shell.

Part of their game was to be 'modern'. The modern age was an age of science and technical progress. Adventure and romance were gone, and even the peaceful things seemed lost. Being modern meant hurrying through life.

There were many older people who looked at life differently, of

<sup>1</sup> The satirical writers Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh knew Mayfair well. Bloomsbury, a district around the British Museum, was a quieter centre for writers. The Bloomsbury 'group' were writers concerned with a more serious view of life. Most people considered them 'highbrow'.

<sup>2</sup> The young writer Noël Coward was also an entertainer in such places.



course. They did not want to be modern. Instead they lived quietly, and more at peace. Retired people, particularly, preferred living out of London.<sup>1</sup> And in dozens of small towns and villages there were upper- and middle-class families prepared to entertain themselves privately and at home.

Gentlemen were content to use their free time in their gardens, digging out weeds and planting, through all the daylight hours. Their wives enjoyed the pleasures of giving tea-parties to a few well-chosen friends. In the evenings, people such as these played games of cards together, especially the game called 'bridge'.

Many middle-aged ladies did useful work in the districts where they lived. Some organized 'bazaars'—otherwise called 'jumble sales' or 'sales of work'—where home-made articles of clothing, and even drinks and cakes, were sold for various good causes. This kind of charity was called 'social work', and the organizers were not paid.

Sometimes a 'bazaar' was one of the attractions at a garden party. Usually it began with a speech by the vicar or some other person, such as a retired army officer, who was important locally. There were many colonels and majors, retired after the war, living now in the southern counties of England. A lot of them valued only the past and had no patience with the present. Many tried to apply their military habits to ordinary life. Such officers, whose faces became red with impatience and anger at some new idea or fashion, became known as 'Colonel Blimps'. A 'blimp', in the dictionary, is a gas-filled balloon.

Although conservative ladies and gentlemen such as these did much social work for the poor, they seldom crossed the class divisions or became friends with those whom they helped. The classes remained separate, divided by manners and by speech. The lower classes ate dinner at mid-day; the upper ate lunch at mid-day and dinner in the evening. The upper classes bathed usually in the morning, if not twice a day; the lower bathed usually before going to bed at night, or once a week. The upper-class greeting was 'how do you do?' spoken with an 'Oxford' voice. The lower classes said 'pleased to meet you,' in a 'common' voice.

But the 'common' voices were growing louder and nearer. Workers were demanding better things. Many were coming out of the slums

<sup>1</sup> Some writers also preferred the quiet countryside to the noise of big cities. John Buchan, for example, lived for many years as a country gentleman, in both England and Scotland.



and settling in new 'council houses', for which they paid low weekly rents to local councils. The unions were pressing all the time. They demanded that wage increases must lead, not follow, price increases in the nation's economy.

When the coal-mine owners threatened to reduce wages, the miners went on strike. The Trades Union Congress, the T.U.C., supported them and allowed workers in other industries to show sympathy by stopping work also. The strike became general. It affected factories, printing presses, railways, gas and electricity, the ports, buses and trams. It was a general strike, which affected the economy of the nation badly.

The government acted. Although Baldwin, the prime minister, refused to use armed force against the strikers, soldiers were used to move supplies. Meanwhile, the government tried to talk with the T.U.C.

The strike continued for 9 days. Over 2 million men had stopped work. Young men of the upper and middle classes learned to drive trains and buses. That was fun for them, although some of the bus windows were broken by angry strikers. Office clerks printed newspapers in single pages, and produced electricity and gas, while typists kept them fed with sandwiches and hot soup. The strike had developed into a kind of struggle between classes.

But it was a gentle struggle. Only the blimps regarded the strike as a 'red' communist threat to Britain. The king remained outside it. The BBC was fair to both sides. None of the strike leaders was arrested, and in one place there was even a game of football played between strikers and police.

The miners stayed on strike for 6 months after the other strikers had gone back to work. They gained nothing. Only the risk of starvation forced them to accept defeat. Life remained awful in the grey, dirty mining towns.<sup>1</sup>

However, the nation gained the knowledge that there could never be a class war in England. The workers were too moderate for that. They were proud of their good sense, and Englishmen now regard the labour troubles of the twenties as a test of it.

### *The lazy 'thirties'*

The last year of the 'gay' twenties was the year of the first English

<sup>1</sup> The novelist A. J. Cronin was a doctor who reported officially on health in the mines.



talking film. Already American ‘talkies’, as sound films were called, were entering the country, and they spread American forms of speech. The word ‘yes’ became ‘yeah’, and ‘O.K.’ was heard in England for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

That year was also the year of the American stock-market slump, when the prices of shares crashed like a tall building falling to the ground.

The effect was felt everywhere. In England hundreds of businesses were ruined. The number of workers unemployed rose from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million within a year.

A Labour government was in power again, under Ramsay MacDonald. Labour was the party of the workers. What would the government do?

It did nothing. There was nothing that it could do. The problem was a world problem. Luckily for the politicians at Westminster, most of the trouble in England was far away from London. It was in the industrial regions of the midlands and the north.<sup>2</sup> There, among the silent factories and empty store-rooms, nearly 7 million men, women and children were soon living on the dole.

In the second year of the slump—or ‘depression’, as it was politely called—the Labour government was faced with a proposal for reducing the dole. The cabinet split, half of its members refusing to accept the proposal. They were working-class ministers and good trade unionists. The mass of the Labour party supported them.

MacDonald became prime minister of a new ‘national’ government. It was a coalition of Conservatives, Liberals and Labour, but only 12 out of 154 Labour M.P.s supported it. Then there was a general election. Thousands of Liberals voted Conservative. Thousands of Labour workers, disgusted with MacDonald, refused to vote.

MacDonald was now prime minister of a government in which 11 of the 20 members were Conservative. His political influence soon faded. Within 4 years the Conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin, was in power again.

<sup>1</sup> The early films were often photographed plays. Many of them, then and later, were written by playwrights such as R. C. Sherriff and Terence Rattigan.

<sup>2</sup> The writer George Orwell studied the situation of poor people by living among them. The writer J. B. Priestley suggested that there were two ‘nations’: the people who lived in the industrial slums north of the river Trent, and those living comfortably in the southern suburbs.



The change did not make much difference. The political leaders of England in the nineteen-thirties were all easy men, unwilling to get hold of the root of any problem. They tried to deal with the economic depression by taxing imports from, countries outside the Commonwealth. This was called 'protection', and it put an end to the Liberal idea of free trade. But it did not solve the main problem of unemployment.

Most government ministers, civil servants and local councillors lacked imagination; and many opportunities to make England a better place were lost at that time. New buildings were ugly, especially the factories which were built along main roads. Rows and rows of houses spread out in new suburbs.

Most of the new houses were 'semi-detached'—that is, joined together in pairs—and most of them were built with a front room and a back room downstairs. In the poorer houses, only the back room was kept heated. The family lived there, lighting the fire in the front room only when receiving guests.

Sometimes middle-class houses were built not in the best modern way but as artificial imitations of the past. Thus there were 'neo-Georgian' and 'mock-Tudor' houses for those who liked ornament and could afford it.

The prime minister, Baldwin, was popular with the middle classes because he reminded them of the old days. With his broad honest face, pipe in mouth, he seemed like an old-fashioned country squire. He was very different from the new leaders, Hitler and Mussolini, who had risen in Europe.

Baldwin's policy was comforting, too. It depended on calm, not excitement. People found it easy to slip into the old ways of peace, pretending that the country was as safe and as content as it had been a century earlier.

But England was not the same as before. It was now an industrial state. The land lay neglected. Weeds and long grass grew in places far from the suburbs and main roads, while hedges thickened into 'copses' or small woods. Young people explored this overgrown countryside for pleasure. They walked, or 'hiked', long distances, picking the wild spring flowers and watching the insects and small birds along the wandering paths.

Hikers walked far for beauty. Others went more lazily, in motor-



coaches or 'charabancs'. Nearer home the countryside had been destroyed by roads and by housing developments. The population was over 40 million and it was rising rapidly. New 'council estates', consisting of blocks of little red-brick boxes, called 'homes', were scattered over the land. These masses of council houses were often placed badly: they spoilt the view of hills and valleys. Also, the houses or homes were built too close together, and they were too small for the families living in them.

The slums of the industrial cities were even uglier, however, and the houses in them were terribly decayed. Paint fell in strips from doors and window-frames. The bricks were often damp and black with smoke. Inside, wooden floors sometimes became rotten with damp.

The children of unemployed parents in these slums were thin and often ill. Many mothers gave their children the largest share of the family's food, and starved themselves.

The fathers and husbands were not only unemployed but often without hope. Sometimes they were persuaded by trade union leaders to join together and march towards London, carrying petitions signed by thousands of persons demanding work.

These efforts to make the government deal with the problem were spread over several years. They were called 'hunger marches'. The long lines of hunger marchers arrived in London after walking scores of miles along hard roads. Some were miners from Rhondda in Wales and the coal areas of England. Others were people—'ex-servicemen'—who had served in the army and navy and were still waiting for work. Others were ship-builders from Glasgow. Most famous of all the marchers were those from Jarrow near Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Many of them wore their best 'Sunday' clothes: cloth cap, stiff high collar, dark suit and shining black boots.

Often, when masses of hunger marchers arrived in Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square, they were met by policemen on horses who tried to break them into smaller groups. Sometimes the marchers' leaders presented their petitions at the House of Commons. Sometimes they went to the prime minister's house at 10 Downing Street, which is also at Westminster, and left their petition with the official who opened the front door.

Many people sympathized with the hunger marchers, and chief among them was King George V. On Christmas Day each year he broadcast a personal message, sincere and kind, over the radio to family homes.



His son Edward, Prince of Wales, seemed particularly democratic. He had shown, by visits to the poor areas, that he regarded their problems with warmth and understanding.

When George V died, many people thought that Edward VIII would be a 'people's king'. They thought that he might shake the conservative politicians and make his ministers generally more progressive.

But Edward had a secret problem. He was in love with an American lady, Mrs Wallis Simpson. Before his coronation he declared that he would marry her. Mrs Simpson had been married twice before, however. The government thought that nobody would want a queen who had been divorced twice. Edward decided that, rather than lose her, he must abdicate—that is, abandon the crown. Thus he became Duke of Windsor, while his younger brother became King George VI.<sup>1</sup>

Although such public behaviour, especially royal behaviour, must still be 'correct', social life generally in England was now easier and less moral than ever before. A year after Edward VIII's abdication, divorce was made easier.<sup>2</sup> Under a new Act it could be obtained more quickly and for more reasons than before.

There were many thinking people in the nineteen-thirties who wanted many kinds of reform. The 'intellectuals'—writers, artists, scientists and many lawyers, for example—wanted moral, social and economic changes to come quickly. Generally they leaned towards the left wing in politics. In the Labour party they were often even further left than the trade unionists. When the civil war started in Spain, many of them joined with workers and went there to support the Spanish republican government,<sup>3</sup> which was being attacked by right-wing armies. Intellectuals and workers fought together in what was called the 'International Brigade'.

The Spanish civil war was like a crusade for the left wing in England, and it made even ordinary people look overseas with worry and concern. The Italians had invaded Abyssinia, which is now Ethiopia. The Japanese had invaded China.<sup>4</sup> The Germans had invaded Austria, and now Hitler was demanding Czechoslovakia too.

<sup>1</sup> See the plan on page 313.

<sup>2</sup> As the result of a Bill introduced by A. P. Herbert, the writer, who was also an M.P.

<sup>3</sup> The poet W. H. Auden was an intellectual who went to Spain.

<sup>4</sup> The poet Ralph Hodgson taught in Japan.



A new prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, thought he could make peace with Hitler, but he failed. England prepared for another war. Young men were taken into the army, the navy, and the air force. Ordinary people were taught how to defend their homes. Everybody realized that this time it would be total war, and thought that it would probably begin with the bombing of London. Nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million mothers and children were 'evacuated'—that is, sent to homes in the countryside. Air-raid shelters were built, sand-bags were filled, and heavy curtains were hung behind windows to provide 'black-out' at night. These things were called 'Air Raid Precautions', or 'A.R.P.'.

On the first day of September, at the end of a fine summer, the Germans invaded Poland. Britain and France had both promised to support Poland if that happened. Now there was no choice. Within two days, England was again at war.

### *England in the Second World War*

World War II, as it is sometimes called, was not like World War I. There had been much technical progress in the 20 years between the two wars, especially in the development of aeroplanes. World War II was much more a war of movement, and it was more widely spread.

It started slowly, however. The Germans conquered Poland within a month, and many Polish refugees escaped to England. But then there were several months of calm, while German armies massed along the French border. A British army, the 'British Expeditionary Force' or 'B.E.F.', was sent to strengthen the border between France and Belgium. At sea, 3 British warships drove the German battleship *Graf Spee* to destruction in the south Atlantic. Armed merchant-ships began their long war against German U-boats, or submarines.

In England, food rationing was started again. Other things, including petrol, cigarettes and clothes, were later rationed too. A 'black market'—the unlawful sale of such goods at prices higher than the rationed price—soon began 'under the counter' in many shops and businesses.

When the Germans invaded Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium, the Chamberlain government fell. A man of strong character, Winston Churchill, a Conservative, who for many years had warned the government of its danger from Hitler and his Nazis, now became prime minister.

Churchill was a natural leader. Although he was 65 years old, his



health was good and his brain was sharp. His appearance reminded people of a bull-dog, which is second only to the lion as the British national animal. His spirit reminded them of John Bull, the Englishman's favourite idea of the tough Britisher.

Certainly Churchill was the greatest leader Britain has ever had in time of war. He awakened the courage and the imagination of millions of people. He united them and bound them together in the common purpose of defeating Fascism.

The future seemed black when he came to power. Three days after his appointment he rose up in the House of Commons and was cheered both by Conservative and by Labour members when he said: 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. . . . You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory.'

Churchill's words suited exactly the romantic spirit of the British people. Although there were more pacifists—or conscientious objectors—in England than during the first world war, many of them soon agreed to do useful work which did not include killing. There were other people who were too old or not fit enough to fight in the army, the navy or the air force. Many of them joined the 'Home Guard'—a civil force, organized to defend local areas against invasion by air or sea. Such men and women also worked in factories producing war supplies, and in the A.R.P. and other necessary services.<sup>1</sup> Almost all men, and most women, were soon doing something to help the war effort.

Two weeks after Churchill came to power, the B.E.F. was driven back to the French coast. Over 300,000 men waited for rescue on the sea shore at Dunkirk. Over 800 small ships went out from England to get them home. Some of these ships belonged to the navy, but many more were little boats. They were privately owned and were sailed across the Channel by their owners. The summer sea was calm, and in 3 busy days and nights the B.E.F. was saved.

The Germans conquered France. Britain waited for an invasion. The defences of the island were weak. Many British soldiers had been captured and were now lost in German prisoner-of-war camps. Many

<sup>1</sup> For example, government offices like the Foreign Office, where the novelist Graham Greene worked, or like the Admiralty (the office responsible for naval affairs), where the writer John Betjeman worked. Services included the fire service, in which the poet Stephen Spender worked.



more were guarding places in the Commonwealth overseas. But Churchill promised: 'We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.'

The next few months in the island's history were, in Churchill's words, Britain's 'finest hour'. Although the invasion did not come, instead there was 'the Blitz'—a German word meaning 'violent attack'.

The German Blitz against Britain was by air. Hitler wanted first to destroy the British air force, the R.A.F. He used over 2,000 aircraft, 'bombers' and 'fighters'. All through the summer, waves of these planes flew over southern England, attacking first the ports and the airfields, and later the towns and the cities. The fighters tried to protect the bombers from the British planes which flew up to meet them.

This long battle became known as the Battle of Britain. There were not many British fighter-planes, and there were even fewer men to fly them. Britons counted the score carefully. Two German planes were knocked out of the sky for every one British plane lost. Many of the British pilots came down safely and were saved to fight again. After several weeks of this terrible struggle, the men of the R.A.F. began to realize that they were slowly winning the Battle of Britain. And by then they had become heroes. People agreed with Churchill that 'never . . . was so much owed by so many to so few'.<sup>1</sup>

The Blitz went on, however. London was bombed for 76 nights continuously. Much of it was burned. People learned to sleep in underground railway stations. Over 15,000 were killed. Over 3 million homes were hit. Then, as the war went on, other cities also suffered. Large parts of Coventry, Birmingham, Bristol, Plymouth and Southampton were destroyed. The men of the A.R.P. saved many buildings and many lives, however. King George VI visited the damaged areas frequently. He gave a new medal, the George Cross, for the bravest deeds.

The war meanwhile had spread. Italy had entered it on the side of Germany. There were naval battles in the Mediterranean and land battles in North Africa, Greece and Crete. Germany invaded Russia.

<sup>1</sup> Later in the war, the R.A.F. attacked widely with bombers, and it fought in many places in the world. Although younger than the 'senior service', the Royal Navy, it soon became as popular as the R.N. had been earlier. The novelists H. E. Bates and Eric Williams, and the poet John Pudney, served in it.



Japan entered the war and captured Hong Kong and Singapore. More British soldiers entered prison camps. America began its long struggle to gain control of the Pacific.

In the summer of the third year of the war, the British won their greatest single battle on land. That was at El Alamein in Egypt, against the Germans and Italians. From El Alamein, the British 8th Army began an advance which carried it across the desert and, joined by the Americans, across the sea into Italy.

In England, the British and the Americans now prepared together for an invasion of Hitler's Europe. They aimed at the Normandy coast of France, where the German defences were weak. On the appointed day—'D-Day'—a huge fleet of ships carrying 150,000 men crossed the Channel. Tanks broke through the German defences and spread out into France.

The allied armies pushed east for nearly a year, while the Russians pushed west. They were closing in on Germany. By the spring of the fifth year of the war the allies were across the river Rhine. Then the Russians reached Berlin. That meant victory in Europe.

The day called 'VE-Day' was marked in England by thanks-giving and joy, although few believed that 'winning the peace' would be any easier than after the first world war. An election soon after VE-Day returned the Labour party to power. The majority of voters had decided that the Conservatives, even under Churchill, were less well fitted than Labour to solve the problems of peace. The majority wanted the social justice—government for the people—which it had lacked before the war.

Few people cared much now for foreign affairs. The Japanese were still in Burma, but 'VJ-Day' was near. Two weeks after Labour's election victory, the Americans finished the war.

They dropped the atomic bomb.

### *After the war*

Britain was poorer now than it had been before the war. The struggle had meant waste and a huge mass of debts. A strict economic policy was necessary. Food rationing continued, and ordinary people's lives remained dull and uninteresting for several years.

The empire faded away, as first India and then colony after colony became independent. The British were turned in more upon



themselves. America and Russia were now the powerful nations. Many Britons found it difficult to realize that their country was no longer 'great'.

Many other Britons simply did not care. They became interested only in the island's economic problems. Industry must be made more modern, so that its products could compete with those of other countries in foreign markets. As election followed election, Labour and Conservative governments followed each other in democratic order, according to the swing of political opinion. The message of each was the same: Britain must export.

There were two keys to the problem: efficient management, and contented and hard-working labour. The trade unions became very powerful. They demanded more and more for the workers, so increasingly the nation's wealth was spread through society. The result was 'the Welfare state'. Working-class families were soon able to buy cars, electric cookers, washing-machines and television sets. No government could resist this development for long, and Labour and Conservative policies became more similar as the years passed.

Rich industrial societies have more problems, however, than how to increase wealth and spread it fairly. The organization of finance, commerce and industry becomes more and more complicated. The position of the ordinary person—labourer, clerk or manager—seems less and less important. Millions of Englishmen in the middle of the twentieth century felt less important than the smallest part of a machine. Society was vast and careless, and they were lost in it.

When George VI died and his daughter became Elizabeth II, there was much talk about 'a new Elizabethan age'. People looked back to the time of 'Merrie England' when, in the reign of Elizabeth I, men had stood tall and powerful in their surroundings. But the new age was not like that. A single person could no longer influence or affect the society in which he lived.

Men and women turned from this new situation in several ways. Some lowered their eyes from the wider horizon and looked to the smaller but friendlier society of their own region. This happened particularly in provincial towns away from London where local dialects, customs and habits still continued. This sense of regional pride was like a wall against the outside world. It gave people the feeling of belonging to a smaller social group which they knew and could understand.



Others 'dropped out' of society altogether. They left 'the rat race', as they called it. They turned away completely from the struggle for wealth and became bohemians.

Others, particularly students, rebelled. At first they were called 'the angry young men'. They tried to persuade older people that opportunities were being wasted, that wealth was not everything, and that the world must be made a better place to live in. But these young men, as they grew older, generally began to accept and even approve. Some in middle age even wondered why their children began to complain against them.

Many thinking people, even intellectuals, accepted the new situation even if they did not approve of it. They had no choice. Democracy means government for the majority of the people, and there was no doubt that most people cared for money, comfort, pleasure and entertainment more than they cared for finer and more exciting things. There was no doubt, either, that both main political parties reflected the wishes of the huge majority of the people. In a democracy, the public gets the government which it deserves.

Besides, underneath the easy surface of modern society there was a private, restless, active desire for better things. Wealth is not happiness, but perhaps the search for truth is a kind of happiness. Thousands of people, men and women, were opening their minds to new ideas. They attended evening classes, talked in groups, used the public libraries, went on study courses, travelled and explored.

Britons have usually been prepared to experiment; but they need time for change. Perhaps, out of all this activity, new things will be attempted. Perhaps fresh ideas will be followed. Perhaps, even, some future thing will bind British society together again, in a sense of national purpose.

Britain might even do something great and useful for the world again, as has happened so often in the past.



# TIME CHART FOR CHAPTER 9

ENGLAND	EUROPE	AFRICA	ASIA	OTHER AREAS
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1901-10

Edward VII (1901-10)	<i>Entente Cordiale</i>	Ashanti railway	Abdul Hamid II	Porfirio Diaz
AJ. Balfour(C) <sup>1</sup>	Francis Joseph	South Africa a	Sun Yat-sen	Sir Wilfrid
Campbell-	Haakon VII	dominion	Hiroboumi Ito	Laurier
Bannerman (Lib)	Carol I			New Zealand a dominion

1911-20

George V (1910-36)	Great War (First World War)	West African National Congress	China a republic Emir Feisal Emir Hussein	Panama Canal Woodrow Wilson Juan Gomez
H. H. Asquith(Lib)				
Lloyd George (Lib)	Lenin			

1921-30

Bonar Law (C)	Mussolini	Fuad I	Mahatma Gandhi	Plutarco Calles
Stanley Baldwin (C)	Weizmann	Abd-el-krim	Mustafa Kemal	Manuel L.
Ramsay	Masaryk	Khama	Ataturk	Quezon
MacDonald (L)	Venizelos		Reza Shah Pahlavi	Queen Salote

1931-40

Edward VIII (1936)	Spanish Civil War	Haile Selassie	Chiang Kai-shek	F. D. Roosevelt
George VI (1936-52)	Hitler	Hertzog	Quaid-i-Azam	Vargas
Neville Chamberlain (C)		Felix Éboué	Jinnah	Marcus Garvey
		Tubman		

## SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-45)

1941-50

Winston Churchill (C)	Stalin	J. B. Danquah	Mao Tse-tung	Perón
C. R. Attlee (L)	Salazar	Emir Idris	Ibn Saud	Iceland a republic
		Bourguiba	Jawaharlal Nehru	

1951-60

Elizabeth II	Tito	Kenyatta	Korean War	Eisenhower
Anthony Eden (C)	Imre Nagy	Nasser	Sukarno	First space rockets
Harold Macmillan (C)	de Gaulle	Nkrumah	Ho Chi Minh	
		Lumumba	Bandaranaike	

1961-70

Douglas Home (C)	Pope John	Mboya	Singapore a	J. F. Kennedy
Harold Wilson (L)	Dubcek	Ian Smith	republic	Che Guevara
			Vietnam War	

## 1971 AND AFTER

Edward Heath (C)				Men on moon
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<sup>1</sup> C = Conservative, Lib = Liberal, L=Labour.



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## *Word-list and general index*

The meanings given are those used in this book.

abbeys (buildings in which monks  
 work and pray, led by an *abbot*), II,  
 33, 69, 88, 104, 107  
*Act: Bill accepted by most members of  
 Parliament and passed by them to  
 become law.*  
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 263, 295, 318–19  
*administration: government,*  
*admiral: officer of highest rank in navy.*  
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 aldermen (older men, or leaders;  
 members of a city or borough  
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 ale (bitter drink made from grain)  
 -houses, *see* taverns  
*alliance: two or more parties or countries  
 working together as allies for a common  
 purpose,*  
*alms: money or goods given to poor people.*  
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*Anglicans: members of the Church of  
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*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, The*, 11  
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 apprentices (learners of a craft, trade or  
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*archbishop: chief among bishops. There are  
 only two in England: Canterbury and  
 York.*  
 archdeacons (churchmen next in rank  
 after bishops), 285  
 archers (men armed with bow and  
 arrows), 19–20, 51, 54, 61, 77  
 armour (metal covering worn over  
 clothes to protect against *arms*,  
 weapons), 10, 19, 36  
 arms (marks showing families in  
 heraldry), 37, 43, 98  
*arms: weapons.*  
 army, 155–6, 163, 186–7, 234–5, 247,  
 249, 254, 281, 327



artists, 215, 258, 283, 302, 304

*art nouveau*, 318

assizes (courts which move from town to town to decide important local cases), 33, 43, 68

*atheist*: person believing that there is no god.

*axe*: tool with wooden handle and short iron blade, used for tree-cutting or in battle.

BBC, the, 334

back-benchers (M.P.s not in government or leading opposition), 276

bagmen (commercial travellers), 243

bailiffs (rent collectors and farm managers), 26, 67

Balder, 12

ballads (poems telling a story, often with music), 123, 309

balls (grand social gatherings for purpose of dancing), 197, 253–4, 320

Bank of England, 184, 211, 272

Bank holidays, 300, 310

Baptists (Protestants believing that only grown Christians, not babies, should go through ceremony of bathing in water as sign of joining the church), 166

*barbican*: outer defence of city or castle, especially in front of main gate.

barons (in early times, members of the king's council; later, lords of low rank), 23–4, 28, 31–3, 39–41, 48–9, 57–8, 64, 66, 73–4, 81–2, 84–5, 88, 96

*baroque*: late Renaissance fashion in art and building, rich with ornament.

*battlement*: space at top of castle wall, with its own low wall having gaps for shooting through.

*bayonet*: pointed knife fixed to the end of musket or rifle.

bazaars, *see* sales of work

beadles (parish officials with duties like village policemen's), 119, 269

bear-baiting, 46, 122

beaus (fops, usually also attractive to ladies), 213, 241–2, 250, 252

*beer*: strong ale made with hops (the dried flowers of a climbing plant).

beggars, 43, 67, 103, 119, 121

beserks, 12

bicycles, 299

*Bill*: official proposal for a law to be made by Parliament.

birth control, 303

bishops (officers of the Christian church, each usually controlling a diocese), 10, 33, 69, 105, 166, 285

blacksmiths, 317

blimps (men, usually retired army officers, with old-fashioned opinions and angry manners), 336

blue-stockings (intellectual women), 261–2

boarding-houses, 293

boatswains (leading seamen in charge of sails and decks), 235

Boers, 298, 307, 311–12

bohemians (persons with free-and-easy behaviour, not with regular habits like most of society), 302, 304

*bomb*: metal shell filled with powder or liquid which explodes after throwing or dropping.

boot-blacks, 309

boroughs (in early times, villages organized for defence; later, towns or parts of city with aldermen and an M.P.), 14, 46–7; pocket and rotten, 198, 200, 267–8

bo'suns, *see* boatswains

bowmen, *see* archers

Bow Street runners, 221, 266

bridge (card-game in which two pairs of players try to score 'tricks'), 336

*brigade*: army group of several hundred soldiers commanded by a brigadier.

brigs (sailing ships), 235

British and Foreign Bible Society, 242



British Broadcasting Corporation, 334  
*broadside: the shots of many naval guns shooting all together from one side of a ship.*  
*bronze: soft brown metal, made from copper and tin.*  
 broughams (one-horse, four-wheeled closed carriages), 303  
*budget: calculation of future income and expense.*  
*bullet: shaped piece of metal shot from a gun.*  
 burgesses (leading citizens, each with the freedom of his borough), 46–7, 64  
 buskers (street-performers), 309  
 butlers (each the head-servant in a house), 241, 319  
 cabinet government (decisions by group of most important ministers), 170, 193  
 cabs, *see* hansom cabs  
 canals, 196, 208, 211  
 cannon: big gun, usually on wheels.  
 canons (churchmen connected to cathedrals), 285  
*capital: either chief city of a country, or wealth used to produce profit.*  
*cardinal: Catholic churchman who sits on the pope's council.*  
 carol-singing, 323  
 cars, 299  
 caste: social class having special rights and duties.  
 castles, 23, 27, 51–2, 97  
 cathedrals (each a main church in a diocese, with a bishop's throne), 69, 100, 284–5  
 Catholics, 100–1, 106–8, 113, 125, 127–9, 132–3, 145–6, 166, 171, 176–7, 183, 221, 266  
 Cavaliers, 155–6, 158  
*cavalry: soldiers on horses.*  
 Celts, 2–3, 5, 7, 10–11, 50–1  
 chamber-maids, 241

*chancellor: in early times, king's official secretary; later, high minister in government.*  
 Chancery (law department of government, or Lord Chancellor's court), 30, 39, 41–2, 68, 265  
 'chapel', 284; *see also* nonconformists  
 chaperons, 294  
 charades (guessing game, in one form of which one side acts a word silently and the other tries to name it), 321  
 charcoal-burners (forest workers who harden wood for fires), 151  
*charge: either accuse of a crime, or rush forward in attack.*  
*charity: organization for helping poor people.*  
 charity schools, 198, 234  
 charters (lists of rights and freedoms), 29, 40, 46–7, 147–8, 275  
 Chartists, 275  
 child-labour, 208, 211, 230, 234, 292  
 chimney-sweeps, boy, 230, 292  
 chivalry (the beliefs, manners and customs of an ideal knight), 37, 53, 62–3, 79, 87  
 chronicles (records of historical events), 11, 95  
 Church Missionary Society, 225  
 Church of England, *see* Anglican church  
 church-wardens (persons representing people of the parish in church affairs) 119, 285  
 churls (free-men, holding land for farming), 8–9  
 cinema, 327, 338  
 Cinque Ports, the, 46  
 circuses (entertainments with animals, usually in a big round tent), 310  
 city companies, 83, 122  
*civil servant: official working for government, usually behind a desk.*  
*civil war: war between people of a single country.*  
 climbing boys, 230, 292



- clothes, *see* fashions
- cloth-making, *see* wool and cotton
- clubs (buildings for persons joining together socially), 213, 253, 277, 296
- coalition: union of political parties, usually for a special purpose in government.*
- coal-mines, 121, 208, 210, 229, 324–5, 337
- coats of arms, *see* arms
- cock-fighting, 5, 122, 207
- cockneys (poor citizens of the East End of London), 102, 309–10
- cocktail parties, 335
- coffee-houses, 188–9
- colonel: army officer of middle rank.*
- colonies, 202, 204, 218–19, 225–6, 279, 285, 287, 306, 308, 315, 345
- colours (regimental flags), 251
- common law (developed from ancient customs), 14, 33, 68, 111, 146
- commons: common people.*
- commons (land reserved for use by common people), 25, 103, 207, 258
- Commons, House of, 66, 96, 102, 126, 146, 149, 152–3, 155, 174, 276, 290–1
- commonweal: good wealth, or welfare, of common people.*
- companies, commercial, 189, 299
- conscientious objectors, 330
- conservative: person against great or sudden change.*
- Conservative party, 270, 274, 276, 280, 289, 300, 323, 326–7, 333
- constables, *see* policemen
- constituency: town or district represented by a Member of Parliament.*
- convicts (persons condemned to punishment), 202, 224–5, 258
- convoys (groups of ships), 330
- Cook's Tours, 279, 306
- coronation: ceremony at which crown is put on a new king's head.*
- coster-mongers (street-traders), 310
- cottages, 227
- cotton industry, 210, 228–30, 324
- councils, parish, town and county, 68, 95, 109, 111, 119, 229, 259, 269, 301–2
- countryside (area with fields and woods but no towns), beauty of the, 98, 123, 161, 205, 258, 279, 317, 321, 339
- county: district with local government.*
- coup: sudden act to obtain power.*
- couriers (persons who carry messages), 121
- courtiers (persons, usually noblemen, attending ruler at court), 73, 124, 152, 166–7
- covenant: agreement to act on a policy.*
- craftsman: workman with special skill in using his hands; for example, in cutting silver.*
- creoles (West Indies merchants), 210
- cricket, 212, 252, 295
- croquet, 321
- crusade: public effort to end a supposed evil.*
- curates (assistants to a priest), 285
- cutters (boats for rowing or sailing), 235
- dandies (foolishly vain men, whose behaviour and clothes lead the fashion), 250, 252, 263, 295
- Danegeld, 16
- Danes, 12–20
- deacons (churchmen with lowest rank, after bishops and priests), 285
- deans (churchmen managing cathedrals), 285
- demesne: part of estate kept with manor-house and farmed directly by landlord.*
- democracy: government by a majority in Parliament representing the majority of common people.*
- Derby (horse-race), the, 295, 310
- dervishes, 301, 308
- dialects (forms of speech, each peculiar to a district or region), 89, 102, 290, 309, 346
- dictator: ruler with full power to make laws.*



dinner parties, 294, 302

*diocese: district of Christian church under a bishop.*

*diplomat: a person working for his government abroad, or in foreign affairs.*

*dissolve: dismiss, bring to an end.*

divorce (lawful ending of marriage after separation), 303, 335, 341

dole (government money given to poor people, especially if unemployed), 243, 334

Domesday Book, 20, 25

*dominion: country in empire with its own government.*

dragoons (cavalry with guns), 187, 281

Druids, 2–3

*duchess: wife or widow of a duke.*

duels (fights in which two persons, armed usually with swords or pistols, settle a quarrel), 122, 155, 167, 192, 249, 263

*duke: lord of the first rank, often a member of the royal family.*

*dyke: deep ditch, with the dug-out earth making a wall beside it.*

*earl: lord of low rank.*

earls (leaders of Saxon tribes), 8–10, 20, 22

East India Company, 139, 148, 218, 223, 225, 287–8

*economic: about the use of money and the production of wealth.*

elections, 197–8, 224, 260, 267, 290–1

*emancipate: set free from limits placed by law or society.*

*émigrés*, 232

empire, *see* colonies and imperialists

enclosures (of land, with fences and hedges), 67, 82–3, 103–4, 111, 118, 207–8, 234, 258

*enfeoffed: holding a fief.*

engagements (to marry), 197, 294

English as a written language, 69, 79, 84, 89, 110, 327

esquires, *see* squires

*estate: area of land, with buildings, owned or rented.*

Exchequer (department of government controlling income and spending), 39, 41–2, 150, 228

*excommunicate: put out a Christian from the Catholic church.*

*execute: punish by killing.*

*expel: punish by sending away or putting out.*

explorers, Elizabethan, 129–30, 139

*export: sell to another country.*

Fabians, 300

factories, 208, 229–31, 251, 259, 299, 324

fairs (market-or show-places, often including ‘fun-fairs’ for entertainment), 45, 243, 310

*fanatic: person willing to do extreme things for an extreme idea.*

farmers, 67, 82, 103, 118, 151, 161, 197, 207–8, 227, 317

fashions, medieval, 73, 97; Renaissance, 98, 100; Elizabethan, 124; Civil War, 155; Restoration, 167–8; 18th century, 214; Regency, 252; Victorian, 278, 285, 295; Edwardian, 321

*fee, see* fief

fencing (sword-fighting for practice or sport), 122, 155

*festival: public occasion when people are merry and dance and sing together.*

feudal system (*feu* = land and property held in exchange for duty or service to a liege-lord), 16, 22–8, 40, 65, 72

*fief (feoff, fee or feu): estate held in feudal system.*

*field-marshal: officer of highest rank in army.*

films, 327, 338

*finance: money, and the managing of money.*

fishermen, 118, 151

flag, the British, 187–8



*flag-ship: main warship in a fleet, carrying the admiral besides its own captain.*

*fleet: group of ships.*

flower-girls, 309

fog (thick mist which, like smoke, hides view), 293

footmen (servants with special duties, indoors or out), 241, 294, 319

footpads (street-thieves who rob with violence), 174, 293

fops (*see also* dandies), 167, 213

forests, 23, 26, 28, 102, 151

*fortify: prepare against attack by building walls (fortifications), digging dykes and getting weapons ready*

*fox: sort of wild dog, with red-brown fur and bushy tail. See hunting*

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, 115

franklins (free-holders of land), 44, 64

frankpledge: system of keeping peace by means of tithings.

free trade (goods flowing freely, without government control or taxes), 228–30, 271, 276, 339

friars (Christians working among people, like priests but outside the church), 44, 69, 104

frigates (middle-sized warships), 235, 245

*frontier: a country's border, sometimes fortified.*

fun-fairs, *see* fairs

furniture, 27, 100, 168, 214, 252, 292

fusiliers (infantry with muskets), 187, 247

*fyrð: Saxon army of free peasants.*

galleons (large warships, or Spanish treasure-ships, with square sails), 131, 136, 236

gallows (wooden frame for hanging criminals), 174

*gamble: risk money in games of chance, such as cards.*

*game: birds, fish or small wild animals kept for sport.*

game-keepers (men employed to keep game ready for hunting), 26, 322

gardens, 97, 190, 240, 336

garden-parties, 321, 336

Garter, Order of the, 62

*general: army officer of high rank.*

*gentry: gentlemen and their families, a class of people between nobles and peasants; the early 'upper-middle' class.*

gibbets, *see* gallows

gigs (small two-wheeled, one-horse carriages), 212

Gilbert and Sullivan operas, 302

gilds, *see* guilds

gipsies (dark-haired wandering people who speak a language called Romany), 233, 243

Girondins, 232

glebes (small areas of farming land preserved for parsons), 10, 69, 104

golf (game in which two players each hit white balls into series of small holes on smooth grass course), 320

*gout: disease causing painful swelling, especially of big toe.*

governesses (private female teachers of children), 262

Grail, the Holy, 8

grammar schools (secondary schools started for teaching Latin, later controlled by local government), 102, 110

Grand National, the, 295

*grand (parent or child): parent of father or mother, or child of son or daughter.*

grand tour, the, 196

'Great Britain', meaning of, 188

Great Council, the, 23, 29–30, 40–2, 48

Great North Road, 174

*green: grassy area in middle of village.*

grenadiers (infantry with bombs), 187

Guards regiments, 187, 249, 255

guilds (groups of merchants or craftsmen working together), 47, 83, 89

gun-boats, 266, 277



*gunpowder: chemical powder made to explode in guns and bombs.*

gypsies, *see* gipsies

*habeas corpus* (writ requiring trial before a judge in public court), 172, 216, 233

hackney coaches, 175

Hakluyt's *Voyages*, 139

halls, *see* music-hall

hansom cabs, 302–3

heirs (persons with lawful right to title or property when owner dies), 24, 36, 66–7

*helmet: metal head-covering worn by fighting-men.*

*heraldry: study of the rank, arms and history of families.*

heralds (officers with special duties at ceremonies), 37

heretics (people with opinions which are against the teachings of the Catholic church), 42, 70, 77, 114–15

hermits (holy men, each living alone), 44

*hero: person who is popular because brave, bold, noble, or clever.*

'high' church, 284

*highlands: mountainous northern part of Scotland.*

highwaymen (persons robbing travellers on the highway), 174, 212

highways (main public roads), *see* roads

hikers (people walking far for pleasure or exercise), 339

Holy Grail, 8

'home rule', 298, 301, 305, 326, 333

horse-races, 295

*House: royal or noble family.*

house-carles (Saxon churls serving in house or at court), 19–20

houses, 227, 231, 259, 272, 292, 339–40; *see also* manor-houses *and* mansions

house-parties, 241, 321

'hue and cry', 42

Huguenots, 129, 132, 148

hulks (prison-ships), 258

hundreds (divisions of a county, each with its own court), 9, 68

hunger marches, 340

hunting, 28, 212–13, 322

hussars (fast cavalry), 187, 281

hymns (Christian songs, generally for use in church), 206, 262, 284

*impeachment: accusation by House of Commons and judgment by House of Lords.*

imperialists (persons supporting the idea of empire), 304, 307–8

*import: buy from another country.*

indulgencies (promises of religious favour such as forgiveness of sins), 44, 101

*infantry: soldiers on foot.*

*inherit: receive position or property lawfully when owner dies.*

inns (taverns with bedrooms), 98, 120, 123, 212, 252, 296

Inns of Court (law colleges), 102

Inquisition, the, 114, 130, 146

intellectuals (people who enjoy using their brains), 341, 347

*interest (on money loans): the amount paid for the use of the money borrowed.*

J.P., *see* justices of the peace

Jacobins, 232–3, 244

Jacobites (supporters of James II and Stuarts), 183, 194, 201–2

jazz (American music of negro origin), 335

Jesuits (special priests acting as missionaries for the Roman Catholic church), 114, 132–3

Jews, 39, 45, 57, 163

jingoists (persons believing in a war-like foreign policy), 297–8, 300, 304

journeymen (skilled workmen employed by master craftsmen), 198, 221, 234, 242



- jousts (fights on horseback for sport, with use of lances, swords, or ball-and-chain), 36
- jubilee: joyful occasion marking 25 ('silver'), 50 ('golden') or 60 ('diamond') years of a ruler's reign.*
- jury: men in court (usually 12) who decide a case after the judge has explained the law to them.*
- justices of the peace (persons appointed as magistrates to help keep the peace), 68, 95, 109, 119, 132, 161, 194
- Jutes, 6–7, 10
- ketches (small sailing ships), 235, 249
- kingdom: country led by a king or queen.*
- King's English, the, 102
- king's peace, the, 23, 28, 42, 50, 109
- knights (noblemen of low rank with title, 'Sir'; in early times, usually concerned with war and chivalry), 7–8, 19, 24, 32, 36–7, 42–3, 48–9, 52–3, 62, 64
- Knights Templar, 35
- labourer: worker in town or country, usually unskilled.*
- Labour party, the Independent, 305; the, 323, 325, 327, 333, 345
- laissez-faire: policy which allows freedom in trade and industry, without government control.*
- Lancaster, House of, 72, 74–8, 81
- lance: a sort of long and heavy spear, used by soldiers on horses.*
- lancers (fast cavalry), 281–2
- landaui (carriages with facing seats, either or both of which can be open or closed), 303
- landlord or landlady: keeper of an inn, hotel, or house for paying guests.*
- land-lords (persons to whom tenants owe duty or rent), 16–17, 24–7, 65–7, 82, 102–3, 151, 197, 233–4, 241, 317, 322
- land-scaping, 196, 240, 252
- Latin (the language of Rome, and the international language of the Catholic church), 5, 10, 30, 47, 84, 102, no, 164
- laureate (poet appointed to write official poems on national occasions), 168, 289, 318, 327
- law-courts, 30, 33–4, 43, 46, 67–8, 84, 119, 162
- leet: manor court and area of government of an estate.*
- left-wing: having extreme radical or socialist opinions in politics.*
- legends (stories, often untrue, which are carried forward as part of history), 7–8, 13
- Levellers, the, 159, 161
- liberal: politician favouring equal opportunity for all people but not wanting much government control.*
- Liberal party, 289, 300, 323, 327, 333
- liege-lords ('over'-lords, to whom feudal service was owed), *see* land-lords
- Little Englanders, 307–8, 311, 316
- livery (special clothes worn by servants of a rich family, followers of a lord, or members of a city company), 83–4, 96
- Lloyd's of London, 189
- Lollards, 69–70, 77, 101
- Lords, House of, 66, 155, 161, 165, 268, 323–4
- lords lieutenant (each the government's chief officer in a county), 113, 119
- 'low' church, 284
- M.C., 329
- M.P.: member of House of Commons.*
- madrigals (short love poems, sung generally by several voices), 123
- magazines (weekly or monthly papers with stories and pictures), 189, 192, 283



magistrates (local judges whose duty is to make the law effective), 68, 95, 119, 192  
 maids (girl servants), 241, 294  
 mail (armour made of metal rings joined as in chains), 19, 36  
*majority: the greater number or part; or in Parliament, the number by which votes on one side are more than votes on the other.*  
 Manchester School, the, 275–6  
*manor: large country estate.*  
 manor-houses (gentlemen's country houses), 26–7, 97, 100, 120, 240  
 mansions (grand houses), 191, 196, 230, 240  
 marcher lords (lords of Welsh marches, counties on border of England and Wales), 51, 59  
 markets, *see* fairs  
*marquis or marquess: lord of high rank, but below a duke.*  
 marriage, 83, 98, 164, 197, 278, 294, 335  
*marsh: area of low-lying, wet, uncultivated land.*  
 martyrs (persons killed because of their religious beliefs), 107, 115  
 masques (forms of entertainment with acting and music), 124, 144  
 mayors (elected heads of city or borough councils), 46–7, 122, 269  
 may-poles, 123  
 medals (flat pieces of printed metal, received as reward and worn on chest), 283, 329, 344  
*medieval: of the middle ages (11th–15th centuries).*  
 melodramas (novels and plays with romantically exciting but simple stories, very different from real life), 263, 274, 295  
 men-at-arms (baron's liveried soldiers), 43, 81, 84, 96  
*men of war: warships.*  
*mercenary: soldier working merely for*

*money and usually fighting for a country not his own.*  
 Merchant Adventurers, 88  
 Methodists (nonconformists practising rules and method in religious life), 206–7, 261–2, 284  
 middle ages, 22–92  
*midlands: middle inland counties of England, now mainly industrial.*  
 midshipmen (young naval officers of low rank), 236  
 Military Cross, 329  
 militia (men serving as soldiers only as and when required), 14, 16, 19, 113, 118, 122, 136, 153, 244  
 mines, *see* coal-mines  
*minister: important member of a ministry, usually controlling a government department.*  
*ministry: the group of politicians forming a government.*  
*miracle: magical act.*  
*missionary: person teaching his religion to others, often abroad.*  
*mistress: woman living with a man who is not her husband (although the word is also used in literature to mean a wife controlling the servants in her house).*  
 Mithra, 5  
*moat: wide and deep ditch, usually filled with water and surrounding a castle or fortified house.*  
 monasteries (buildings in which monks live and pray), 10–12, 33, 69, 98, 100, 104–7  
 monks (Christian priests living together rather than in a parish, under special rules for the worship of God), 10–11, 33–4, 69, 104, 106–7  
 monopolies (full rights to make or sell particular goods or services without competition), 139, 148, 152, 184  
*moor: area of open land, without trees or fields.*  
 moots (meetings in council, or courts of justice), 9, 23–4, 42, 49



music-hall (entertainment on stage, with songs and dances), 295, 319

*musket: long hand-gun, filled with small round balls or 'shot',*

*mutiny: rebellion by seamen or soldiers against their officers.*

nabobs (East Indies and India merchants), 210

nannies, 293; *see also* governesses

navy (the country's warships and crews), 14, 99, 131, 164, 173, 200, 225, 235–6, 244–5

New Learning, the, 100–4, 118

New Model army, the, 158–9, 162

newspapers, 189, 277, 309

night-clubs, 326, 335

night-walkers (paupers without homes), 316

*nobles: noblemen, or lords, making the social class called the 'nobility'.*

nonconformists (Protestants refusing to accept forms of worship of Church of England), 166, 182–3, 198, 210–11, 262; *see also* Baptists, Methodists, Quakers and Presbyterians

Normans, 18–20, 22–4, 27–9, 31–2, 38

north-west passage, the, 129–30

novels (books telling an imagined story), 18th century, 197, 242; 19th century, 283, 306; 20th century, 325

novices (persons learning to be monks), 11

nuns (women worshipping God while living in special homes called convents or nunneries), 36, 84, 107

Odin, 12

Orangemen, 183

ordeal, trial by (test of the body used as means of justice), 30, 33

organ-grinders (barrel-organ players), 309

orphans (children without parents), 211

outlaws (persons declared outside the

law, such as uncaptured criminals), 25, 28

Oxford Movement, the, 277

pacifists, 330, 343

pack-men, *see* pedlars

painters, *see* artists

palmeres (poor monks or pilgrims), 45

pantomimes (stage-shows based on fairy stories, with songs and dances), 310

papists (Roman Catholic followers of the pope), 116, 128, 145, 171

parchments (sheets of animal skin, whitened and written on like paper), 11, 39

pardoners (men selling written pardon for sins), 44

*parish: part of a diocese, usually with its own church and priest.*

Parliament, beginning of, 49–50, 66, 96; Reformation, 105–7; 'Short', 151; 'Long', 152, 159–60; Rump, 160, 163; 'Barebones', 163; Cavalier, 165–6; *see also* Lords and Commons

parsons (priests responsible for parishes), 10, 26, 69, 104, 106, 205–6, 227, 261, 285

*partner: person who shares with another, particularly in business.*

*patent: right to make and sell an invented article without risk of competition.*

paupers (people without money and without work), 119, 132, 174, 230, 268–9, 316

peasant: poor farmer; or farm labourer working for wages.

pedlars (travelling sellers of small articles), 44, 243, 309–10

Peelites, 276, 280

*peer: duke, marquis, earl, viscount or baron.*

peers (persons of equal rank), trial by, 66

*pension: money paid by government or employers to old, ill or retired person.*



- Pepys's *Diary*, 165  
 periodicals, *see* magazines  
*petition: paper declaring rights or request-ing political, religious or economic improvement.*  
 petty sessions (meetings of a local court under J.P.s), 68, 111  
 pick-pockets (people who steal from pockets in a crowd), 309  
 picnics (meals eaten out of doors for pleasure), 241  
 Picts, 4, 6–7  
*pike: sort of spear, but held and pushed rather than thrown.*  
 pilgrims (persons travelling to holy places for worship), 34, 43, 88, 98  
 pinnaces (eight-oared rowing boats), 235  
 pirates (sea-robbers who attack ships and raid coasts), 173, 189  
*pistol: small gun, held in one hand.*  
 plague (serious disease which spreads quickly among population), 64, 83, 98, 169  
 Plantagenet family, 31–2, 57, 72, 78, 81  
 play-boys, 335  
 plays, medieval, 89; Elizabethan, 123; Restoration, 167; 19th century, 263, 295, 303; musical, 310; 20th century, 318–19, 325  
*plot: secret plan, usually political and unlawful.*  
 poachers (thieves catching game on private land), 28, 119, 208, 258, 322  
 pocket boroughs, 198, 268  
 policemen, 119, 266, 269, 309  
*policy: plan of action made by a king, government or party politicians.*  
 poll taxes (applying to all people), 70  
*pope: the bishop of Rome, head of the Catholic church.*  
 postal service, 272, 290  
 post-chaises (carriages with horses hired for travelling long distances), 212  
 post-horses, 121, 212  
 pottery towns, 324  
*prelate: high official of church, such as a bishop or an abbot.*  
 pre-Raphaelites, 283, 292  
 Presbyterians (Protestants whose church is governed by 'elders' all of equal rank), 144, 159, 166, 182, 188, 284  
 press gangs (groups of men employed to force or 'press' men into the navy), 173, 186, 235  
*pretender: person claiming to be king and demanding throne from real king.*  
 priest-holes, 128  
 Prince of Wales, title of, 52, 76  
 printing, 89  
 priories (monasteries and nunneries under priors and prioresses and usually controlled from abbeys), 88, 107  
 prisons, 202, 207, 224, 258–9  
 privy council (council of ruler's private advisers), 41–2, 96, 271  
 prize-fighting, 212  
 prize-money (seamen's rewards), 236  
*Protector: person governing during a regency or in absence of a king.*  
 Protestants (Christians who protested against, and became separate from, the Roman Catholic church), 108, 110, 115–16, 125; *see also* Puritans and nonconformists  
*province: area distant from London.*  
 public schools (private secondary schools, not state schools, mainly for upper and middle classes), 196, 286  
 pubs (public houses, with rooms for drinking beer and stronger drinks), *see* inns and taverns  
*Punch* (magazine), 294, 311  
 Punch and Judy, 243, 310  
 Puritans (Protestants who left the Anglican church, wanting stricter and purer religion), 125, 128, 132, 138, 144–5, 147, 155, 161–2, 166



Quakers (Christians of a group with no priests because believing that God helps them directly to live purely, peacefully and simply), 163, 166, 182–3, 202

quarter-days (4. days in year on which rents, rates, etc. are due), 95

quarter sessions (county and borough courts sitting 4 times a year), 68

radicals (reformers wanting extreme political changes), 244, 260–1, 269, 300

rag-time, 326

railways, 264, 272, 279

rakes (men of fashion living without morals), 167, 216

ransoms (payments for the freeing of people captured), 36, 38

rates: *taxes on land and buildings paid to local councils.*

rationing: *limiting to a fixed quantity for purpose of equal sharing.*

reason, the age of, 190

rebellion: *resistance organized usually against king or government.*

recant: *agree to change opinion, declaring it false.*

receptions, 197, 319–20

rectors (priests receiving the tithes of their parishes), *see* parsons

reeves (each a chief magistrate in a district), 9, 27; (stewards and estate managers employed by lords and guilds), 26–7, 67, 119

reform: *make better by removal of faults and errors.*

refugee: *person escaped from trouble and violence.*

regent: *person ruling during childhood, absence or illness of a king.*

regiment: *several hundred soldiers commanded by a colonel.*

reign: *act of being a king or queen.*

relic: *thing belonging to a holy man, preserved after his death and worshipped.*

repeal: *put an end to an Act and thus change the law.*

republican: *person believing that the head of state should not be a king but elected.*

resorts, *see* spas

restaurants, London, 320

restore: *put back into original position.*

revolt: *rise and fight against government or law.*

revolution: *complete change in political, social or economic situation.*

rifle: *long hand-gun, shooting a bullet from a grooved barrel.*

riflemen (fast-shooting, quick-moving soldiers), 247–8

right-wing: *having extreme conservative opinions in politics.*

riots (unlawful disturbances by crowds of people attacking property or persons), 194, 216, 221, 251, 259–60, 275, 325

roads, 4, 23, 43, 98, 121, 211–12, 299, 317

robes: *long, loose clothing, worn hanging from the shoulders.*

rogues (dangerous vagabonds), 119, 121

rolls (government records), 39

Roman-Britons, 5–7

Roman Catholics, *see* Catholics and papists

Romanies, *see* gipsies

romantic: *about love, beauty or adventure.*

rotten boroughs, 198, 200, 267–8

Roundheads, 155–6, 158

Royal Academy (of Arts), 215

Royal Society, the, 168, 210

*Saint or St.: holy person or angel of the Christian church.*

saints' days, 101

sales of work, 336

Salvation Army, 296

sanctuary (sacred place giving protection to person escaping from violence or arrest), 42



- sans-culottes*, 232
- satire: writing which attacks persons, government or society by making them seem foolish.*
- Savoy operas, the, 302
- Saxons, 6–10, 20, 22–3, 29, 38
- schools, 84, 102, no, 196, 198, 242, 265, 286, 302
- schooners (small, two-masted sailing ships), 235
- scutage ('shield money', paid for a fief), 27, 32, 40, 57
- seamen, Elizabethan, 129–32, 139; 18th century, 225, 235–6
- seaside, the, 293
- 'season' in 'town', the, 197, 319–20
- sedan chairs, 175
- see: office or position of a bishop.*
- sepoys, 285–6
- serfs (servants working on an estate, which they were not allowed to leave), 13, 46, 64, 67
- sergeant: soldier or policeman with rank lower than an officer but higher than a common soldier or constable.*
- sextons (officials responsible for keeping churches and churchyards in good condition), 119, 285
- shanties (sea-songs), 236
- share-holder: owner of shares in a business company.*
- sheep, *seewool*
- shell: big exploding bullet shot from a heavy gun.*
- sheriffs (each a chief government officer in a shire or county), 9, 23–4, 33, 42, 67, 111
- ship money (tax providing money for the navy), 150
- ships of the line, 235, 245
- shire: county.*
- shooting, 213, 288, 321
- sins: offences against God's laws.*
- slaves, 6, 9, 13, 268
- slave trade, the, 130, 145, 173, 224, 247
- slump: fall of prices and decrease of trade.*
- slums (areas where poor and dirty houses are crowded together), 290–1, 309, 324–5, 340
- Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, 224, 228
- smugglers (men carrying things secretly and unlawfully into a country), 173, 227–8
- snobs (people with too much respect for social position and wealth), 185, 274, 320
- snuff, 173
- soap-box speakers, 277
- socialists (people believing that political power should belong to the mass of people), 274–5, 300, 304–5, 316, 333, 341
- Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 190
- socmen or sokemen (free tenants, paying rent for fiefs), 27, 57
- songs, 123, 201, 206, 236, 310, 319
- spas (health-giving towns, popular for retirement and holidays), 191–2, 252, 293
- speaker: M.P. chosen by House of Commons to preserve order at its meetings.*
- spear: weapon for throwing with sharp metal point at end of long wooden handle.*
- speech, English, 89, 102, 244, 263, 286, 290, 309, 334, 336, 338
- spurs (sharp metal fitting to horse-rider's heels), 53
- squires (knights' attendants), 36, 53, 101; (country gentlemen with estates), 101–2, 107, 119–20, 151, 172–3, 197, 205–8, 233–4, 240–1, 322
- stage-coaches (regular coaches carrying passengers and parcels long distances), 212
- standard (flag), the royal, 53
- Star Chamber, the, 96, 150, 153
- statesman: leader in national and international affairs.*



- statute: written law of government or Parliament.*
- stewards (land-lords' chief servants, controlling other servants and managing expenses), *see* reeves
- stock-brokers (businessmen who trade in company shares for other people), 189, 320
- stocks: property in a business company.*
- stocks (wooden frame with holes for hands and feet), 42, 119
- stone age men, 1
- strike: stop work either with support of trade union (official) or without (unofficial).*
- strips (of land for agriculture), 9, 25–6, 118
- Stuart, House of, 112, 127, 180, 201
- submarines (warships moving under surface of sea), *see* U-boats
- suburbs (parts of a town away from the centre), 272–3, 292, 320, 339
- suffragettes (women violently demanding the right to vote), 326, 333
- summon: command attendance at meeting or court.*
- summoners (officials carrying writs), 43
- Sunday schools, 242
- sweat-shops (work-rooms in which payment is for each piece produced), 316
- 'swells', *see* dandies
- tanks (army cars with guns and moving on tracks not wheels), 331
- taverns (small inns offering food and drink only), 119–20, 243, 252, 277, 296
- tea-drinking, 227, 294
- temperance movement, the, 296
- tenant: holder of land or property for which he pays rent or gives service.*
- territorial, *see* militia
- thanes (leaders of Danish tribes, holding land in exchange for service), 13, 16–17
- theatres, 122–3, 161, 167–8, 185, 214, 295, 303
- Thing, the*, 13
- Thor, 12
- throne: ceremonial seat of a king or queen.*
- Times (newspaper)*, 277, 282
- tithe: tenth part of a man's produce, given for the support of priests.*
- tithings (groups of men formed to keep the peace), 30, 67
- toffs: upper classes; see also dandies*
- tolls (road taxes), 211–12
- Tommies: English soldiers (from the name Tom or Thomas).*
- Tories, 172, 176, 189, 193–4, 260, 266–7, 270, 323
- torture: cause great pain, usually as a punishment or means of persuasion.
- tournaments (competitions between groups of armed knights), 36–7
- towns, Roman, 4–7; medieval, 45–8, 64–5, 97; 17th century, 174–5; 18th century, 229–31; 19th century, 243, 259, 291–3; 20th century, 324
- Tractarians, 277
- tracts (printed arguments, putting forward a religious or political opinion), 242, 277
- trade unions (groups of workers organized on basis of self-help and protection), 198, 265, 270, 300, 305, 324–5
- train-bands (London militia), 122, 136, 153–4
- traitor: person guilty of treason.*
- tramp-steamers, 324
- trams (sort of bus moving on rails in a street), 303
- transportation (the sending of criminals to a colony as a punishment), 177, 202, 225, 258
- traps (small, two-wheeled carts for people), 299
- treason: political crime against king or state.*
- treasury: place where government money is kept or managed.*



*treaty: official agreement, usually between nations.*

trenches, the, 328–31

*trial: examination at law to judge right or wrong.*

trials, by combat or battle (means of judging guilt by result of fighting), 30, 66; by jury, 43, 66, 84

Tudor, House of, 91–2, 97–8, 112

turnpikes (bars across roads, acting as toll-gates), 211–12

U-boats (German submarines), 329–30, 342

*union: state of being united, joined together, in a single form.*

Unionists (people against Irish independence), 305–6, 326

Union Jack, the, 187–8

unions, *see* trade unions

V.C., 283

vagabonds (poor people without work, wandering from place to place), 119, 121

valets (menservants responsible for masters' clothes), 241, 319

'variety' theatre, 319, 326

vaudeville, *see* music-hall

vergers (caretakers of churches), 119

vicars (parish priests usually paid by private salary), *see* parsons

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villeins (peasants on manor in feudal system), 24–7, 42, 46, 65, 67, 70, 103

*viscount: lord of middle rank, below a marquis.*

*volley: the shots of several muskets or rifles shooting all together.*

*waltz: sort of dance or dance-music.*

Wardrobe (king's private office), 41–2

wards (young persons in care of guardian responsible for preserving their property), 24

watch and ward, writs of, 42, 50

watering-places, *see* spas

Watling Street, 4

week-end parties, 241, 321

wergild (man-price, the value of an act of personal violence), 9, 13–14

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wigs (false hair worn on head), 167, 214, 228

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Witan (Anglo-Saxon king's council), 9, 17

witches (women supposed to use bad magic), 162, 190

Woden, 8

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wool industry, 47, 60, 82–3, 88, 102, 104, 210

● work-houses, 119, 208, all, 234, 269

writs (written summonses or orders of king or court), 30, 39, 41–3

yeomen (land-owning farm-workers, free from feudal service), 60–1, 67, 77, 84, 118–19, 151

Yeomen of the Guard, 97

yokels (poor uneducated countrymen), 289–90, 317

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The picture on the front of this cover imagines the Globe theatre in London as it was in Shakespeare's time. (Illustrated London News.)

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